WORKERS VANGUARD

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No. 1185 — June 2025

Workers: Stand with Iran and Palestine!

Majid Asgaripour/WANA

June 15, Sharan Oil depot: Israel rains fire on Tehran. Workers must defend Iran and Palestine against the U.S. and Israel.

JUNE 18—In its drive to make the world bow to its dictates, U.S. imperialism is once again on the warpath. Israel's bombing of Iran is adding fuel to a fire that has already devastated large swaths of the Near East. Now, with the buildup of its military might in the region and its threats on the life of Iran's supreme leader, the U.S. and its Zionist ally have brought the world to the brink of a broader conflict that will be hard to pull back from.

As we go to press, it's not clear where this will lead. But one thing is for sure: If U.S. imperialism gets away with pulverizing Iran, it will not stop there. It will become more belligerent and gain more leverage to tighten its talons on the Global South and China—and bring the carnage abroad back home in the form of greater regimentation, repression and chaos.

To defend ourselves from being trampled by the rampaging U.S. rulers, working people must join together to take a stand right now with Iran and Palestine, as laid out in the June 13 *Spartacist* supplement reprinted below. Pacifist declarations by "progressive" Democrats will change nothing. An actual blow against the imperialist butchers by a united labor movement is needed to stay their hand and give workers and the oppressed internationally time to regroup and strengthen their defenses.

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Israel's strikes on Iran open a new front in the Zionist state's genocidal frenzy. This new offensive aims to draw the U.S. into the conflict and knock Iran out as a regional counterweight. If successful, Israel will have a free hand to further the extermination of the Palestinians and terrorize the entire region. ***Workers all around the world: Mobilize against Israel and the U.S.! Defend Iran! Defend Palestine!***

This is essential not only for the sake of people in the Near East, who face the threat of carnage on an unprecedented level, but to ***advance the economic and social conditions of workers everywhere.*** If Israel and the U.S. are allowed to further escalate the conflict, the barbarity, bloodshed and worsening economic conditions will spread throughout the world.

If workers in the West and in Israel do not mobilize now against the criminal actions of their governments, ***they will be mobilized*** by their governments to commit crimes on an ever-growing scale. If workers of the Global South tolerate their governments' conciliation of the U.S. and Israel, ***they will be the next victims of the imperialists and their agents.***

Nothing good will come from the liberal institutions, whether the UN, the EU or the ICC. They have all shown themselves to be either ***complicit*** in Israel's crimes or ***utterly impotent.*** Only workers and the oppressed peoples of the world can put a stop to the ever-growing spiral of barbarity. ***Demonstrate! Strike! Stop U.S. and Israeli arms shipments!*** Do not let the U.S. and Israel get away with it once again! ■

La Raza Built Los Angeles
All Labor Must Beat Back Trump

The leaflet below was originally printed as a Workers Vanguard *supplement on June 10.*

Trump has unleashed the National Guard and active-duty Marines on Los Angeles to stomp out any anti-ICE protest. This escalation of his anti-immigrant crackdown—coming after the ramping up of workplace raids and arrest and beating of SEIU California president David Huerta—has set a chilling precedent. Border czar Tom Homan is threatening "more work site enforcement than you've ever seen in the history of this nation," while Trump himself promises that protesters "will be hit harder than they have ever been hit before."

This is a vicious attack not just on immigrants, but on the entire labor movement—tearing at the fabric of the unions and decapitating their leadership. But that was always one of the goals of the deportations: to weaken and divide the working class. The fig leaf of going only after criminals was always B.S., just an excuse for the Feds to terrorize immigrant communities and the working population as a whole. Ask any black person if the "war on drugs" was just about "going after the criminals." Especially in L.A., where the working class is majority Latino and immigrant, if you think these attacks are

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Kyodo

June 8: Anti-ICE protesters defend against National Guard invasion of Los Angeles. For working-class mobilization to stop Trump's attacks!

Elections After the Coup

For a Working-Class Anti-Imperialist Pole!

SOUTH KOREA

Chung Sung-Jun/Getty

Seoul, January 3: Mass protest against impeached president. Opportunity to advance cause of South Korean working class was squandered by labor leaders diverting anger into support for Democratic Party.

Reprinted below is a May 27 Spartacist *supplement incorporating a factual correction. The June 3 snap presidential elections resulted in the victory of Lee Jae-myung of the bourgeois Democratic Party of Korea (DPK). Large sections of the labor movement—from KCTU leaders to "revolutionary" organizations like Workers Solidarity and the Korean Bolshevik Group—succumbed to liberal pressure and supported the DPK. This was utterly counterposed to the crucial struggle to break the U.S.-South Korea alliance.*

Following last December's abortive coup, South Korea was convulsed by four months of protests drawing in millions of workers and youth. What has been the result? Yoon Suk-yeol has been impeached, but the protesters' anger has been diverted into supporting Lee Jae-myung of the Democratic Party in the June 3 special presidential election. Lee has made clear that he will uphold the same bankrupt system that is driving South Korea toward disaster: defense of the *chaebol* capitalist conglomerates and the alliance with U.S. imperialism that underpins them. A sharply different course is needed: a movement based on the powerful industrial working class whose starting point is a ***break with the U.S. alliance***.

Trump's tariff war threatens to devastate South Korea's export-driven economy, which already contracted in the first quarter of 2025, the worst performance in the OECD. And things are about to get a lot worse. The U.S. will press for a huge reduction in trade with China and, crucially, insist that South Korea prepare to play a key military role in its drive to war against the People's Republic. As Washington escalates its global offensive, the screws will be turned ever tighter and the South Korean capitalists will be impelled to launch more attacks on democratic rights and the militant trade-union movement.

Central responsibility for the current impasse lies with the leadership of the South Korean labor movement, abetted by forces from the left-nationalist *jucheists* to self-styled Marxists. The KCTU union federation earned great authority among anti-coup protesters by standing with them from day one in defense of democratic rights. But rather than mobilize the workers independently against the attacks by Yoon's People Power Party, the union leaders channeled discontent into the arms of the Democratic Party, building common platforms like the Emergency Committee. This allowed far-right forces in and around the PPP to grow bolder, shouting anti-communist and anti-KCTU slogans while waving U.S. flags at their own mass rallies.

Yonhap

Seoul, September 2024: Lee Jae-myung (left) greets then U.S. Ambassador Philip Goldberg. Even before the elections, Lee showed his loyalty to maintaining the U.S.-South Korea alliance.

As for the left, they acted as cheerleaders for the politically amorphous anti-Yoon protests. Some among them openly rejected struggling against the U.S. alliance; others looked to a supposed progressive wing of South Korean capitalism. Some did both. The *jucheist* Progressive Party withdrew its own candidate to support Lee Jae-myung. The top KCTU leadership also pushed for support to the Democratic Party but was opposed by others in the union. However, these forces are backing the candidate of the small Democratic Labor Party (the renamed Justice Party) despite its electoral alliance with the bourgeois Greens. The most shameless position has been that of Workers Solidarity, affiliated to the International Socialist Tendency, which asserted for more than a month that "there is no alternative except to vote for Lee Jae-myung" (ws.or.kr, 6 May). In a sheepish, last-minute line change they now call for a vote for either the DLP or the Democratic Party.

None of these trends provide a way forward for the working class. That means the only winners will be the South Korean capitalists and the U.S. imperialists who stand behind them. The mass anti-coup protests provided a real opportunity to push forward the interests of the workers against both these forces, with the bourgeoisie deeply divided and its repressive agencies temporarily paralyzed. But the left squandered the opportunity, and the workers' cause has not advanced a single step.

Confronting Trump's Rampage

As the U.S. tears up the post-WWII world order to shore up its slipping hegemony, South Korea is caught in a vise. Due to its strategic location as an anti-communist bulwark in East Asia, South Korean capitalism was a major beneficiary of the U.S.-run global system that Trump is now ripping apart. Under the American umbrella, secured by tens of thousands of U.S. troops, its industrial economy grew enormously. This produced a powerful working class, which placed itself at the head of the struggles against U.S.-backed dictatorships in the 1980s. As the Cold War against the Soviet Union wound down, the U.S. came to view naked police-state rule as a hindrance to furthering its broader goals. Significant democratic gains were achieved along with higher living standards, all in the framework of a deeply unequal capitalist society.

But South Korea's continued dependence on and oppression by imperialism impacted its economy more and more with every international financial crisis, from 1997 on. And now the U.S. is upending the liberal-democratic world order to confront its main rival, China. U.S. aggression against China is aimed at overturning the gains of the 1949 Revolution which overthrew capitalist/landlord rule. This drive is not only directed against the Chinese people but threatens the economic and social conditions of workers throughout East Asia and beyond. The U.S. bases and U.S.-South Korean war games serve to push the region closer to war. And as Washington escalates its demands on South Korea to help pay for the anti-China offensive, the capitalists will up their exploitation of the workers to foot the bill. It is in the direct interest of the working class to oppose this and take the side of China against imperialism.

PPP presidential candidate Kim Moon-soo is a fervent anti-communist who completely backs the U.S. against China. Lee Jae-myung's rhetoric is different; he calls to "maintain amicable relations" with Beijing, adding "We can say 'xiexie' [thank you] to both China and Taiwan and get along with everyone." He also calls to "rebuild mutual trust" with North Korea. At the same time, Lee repeatedly emphasizes that the U.S. alliance is the "foundation of the Republic of Korea's foreign policy." As Trump pursues his offensive, Lee will have to fall in line over China if he wins the election. The top commander of the U.S. forces in Korea put it starkly in a March 15 speech, calling South Korea a "fixed aircraft carrier floating in the water" near China.

Those leftists who refuse to defend China against the U.S. betray the workers' interests. A case in point is March to Socialism, loosely associated with the Trotskyist Fraction. Falsely labeling China an imperialist country, MTS calls the current world situation a "showdown between great powers" in which workers have no side. Others, notably in the *jucheist* milieus, build illusions in the regimes in Beijing and Pyongyang. But

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No. 1185 **JUNE 2025**

Letter

Words of Appreciation

3 May 2025

To: SL

WV #1184 (April 2025) is one of the most outstanding, informative, and inspirational issues ever. The article "Why U.S. Imperialism Needs Trumpism" is particularly enlightening, especially the section explaining why the U.S. imperialist ruling class is readying the nation for a faceoff with China and needs to dump bourgeois liberal democratic trappings for a raw Bonapartist police state.

I was saddened to learn of the death of Mark Klein [see *WV* No. 1184]. Of course, I worked and collaborated with him when we were both active in the Militant Caucus of the SSEU. However, I particularly admired him for his heroic work as an AT&T worker, exposing the sinister shenanigans of the NSA. Please convey my deeply felt condolences to those who know him.

Thanks,
Lyndon H.

***WV* replies:** We thank our reader for his letter. ■

Labor Must Take the Lead

Zohran Won't Fix New York

Trump is just getting started. He has declared naked war on the working class in Los Angeles, and New York is already feeling the squeeze. The NYC Democratic mayoral primary is quickly approaching, and the central debate is over who is best equipped to stand up to Trump and offer some crumbs to New Yorkers along the way. The race has come down to machine politician Andrew Cuomo versus newcomer Zohran Mamdani.

After the Democrats' spectacular defeat in the presidential elections, they have been desperately trying to figure out the way forward for their party—which has fallen out of favor with both the bosses they serve and the workers whose votes they need to get elected. This primary may well determine the general direction the Democrats take to tie workers back to their party in order to restrain working-class anger. Workers have absolutely no interest in voting on which Democrat will swindle them.

Cuomo is Wall Street's favored hardline candidate. He is well-connected to the oligarchy and has much of the union bureaucracy in his corner to help line up workers behind him. He cynically promises to undo all the devastation of workers that he engineered as governor—from leaving workers to die during the pandemic to cutting pensions and healthcare (see article below). His relentless attacks against the working class threw open the door to Trump 2.0.

Then we have the new "progressive" darling Zohran Mamdani. His promises to lower the cost of living have captured the hearts of young people alienated by the DNC establishment. Unlike Cuomo, he isn't in the pocket of Wall Street and can blame his inability to deliver on its resistance. But this only makes him ***more effective*** at shoring up support for his party and heading off a social explosion on behalf of the oligarchy. This is why he offers only the most minimal measures to keep the heads of the working class barely above water. Like AOC and former NYC mayor Bill de Blasio, he will fall in line with the Democratic machine because he is firmly committed to reviving this party of bankers and landlords.

Zohran has already given a taste of how fast he will roll over. While he gives lip service to freeing pro-Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil, Zohran has ditched his anti-Zionism as soon as he was reminded of the party line. He wants to run U.S. imperialism's financial center as a representative of the party of genocide in Gaza—the very party that paved the way for Trump's repression of pro-Palestinian protesters and smearing of them as anti-Semitic.

The pressure is only going to rise from here. Trump's repression of pro-Palestinian protesters was a test run for mass immigrant round-ups. For all the noise coming from "progressive" Democratic L.A. mayor Karen Bass about refusing to collude with the Feds, her cops have done just that. Zohran talks the same talk, while proposing a Department of Community Safety to relieve the cops of social-work duties that are "preventing them from doing their actual jobs." But what are their actual jobs? To attack the pickets of striking workers, enforce evictions, terrorize black people—and collude in ICE raids.

Zohran's real role isn't to mount a serious challenge to the Establishment, but to make a flailing capitalist party appear as if it can be a party of the people. The truth is that ***neither Cuomo nor Zohran will put up a real fight against Trump.*** Only the working class can defend NYC. It is urgently necessary to channel the widespread anger at the decaying status quo into a movement independent of the Democrats that organizes immigrants, workers, the poor and the struggling middle class against the capitalist onslaught.

How to Defend Ourselves

Trump's real goal is and has always been to force the working class into submission. A million federal workers lost their collective bargaining rights at the stroke of a pen and now any union could be outlawed at a moment's notice. Like L.A., NYC runs on immigrant labor—mass deportations are a threat to the whole labor movement! How can workers build a solid picket line and fight to improve their conditions if their coworkers are worried that causing trouble will get them a one-way flight to a prison colony? Trump knows deporting every immigrant would crash the economy, but he wants to be able to pick off the working class through fear and division.

New York is still a union town, but the unions have barely played any role in defending the class from the cost-of-living crisis, let alone protecting immigrant workers against ICE raids. Unions like 32BJ SEIU, UAW and PSC-CUNY have demonstrated against ICE. Good. But their leaderships have limited these protests to expressions of moral outrage, rather than displays of collective strength that can disrupt business as usual. This is because these misleaders are in bed with the Democratic Party that has ruined this city and loves immigrants only so long as they remain a cheap pool of labor to exploit. The union bureaucrats keep labor on its knees, bound with no-strike clauses and divided by competition over limited resources.

For the working class to protect itself, it must ***defend its most vulnerable layers.*** The bosses target immigrants and pro-Palestinian activists first to divide and weaken the workers movement. Workers must ***consolidate immigrants behind the union movement by organizing them into its ranks.*** ICE would think twice if every time they snatched someone, their union brothers and sisters shut down the workplace until they are returned!

Such efforts would go a long way toward building the solidarity and organization needed to compel the Wall Street vultures and real estate barons to make NYC affordable. Whether it's taking on parasitic slumlords or opposing military mobilizations against immigrants, New York's working class and poor need a plan of action independent of and in opposition to the Democrats.

We Can't Afford to Live Here

Trump is the reactionary landlord class of NYC personified. Taking him on means taking on Wall Street and all the capitalists who make this city hell. Take a look at housing, one of the central drivers of the cost-of-living crisis. The lowest number of available apartments in over a half century has rents skyrocketing, while millions of square feet in Manhattan stay empty. High rents and low wages have been driving out growing numbers of New Yorkers since the pandemic. Typical of Democrats overseeing "sanctuary cities," Eric Adams capitalized on the miserable housing conditions of working-class and poor New Yorkers to deepen the polarization between mostly Hispanic immigrants and black people by housing immigrants in the ghettos and barrios. This only inflames racial divisions and forces these groups to fight over

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1199 Tops Back Covid Killer Cuomo

While many on the liberal left are embracing Zohran Mamdani, union leaders in NYC have largely lined up behind front-runner Andrew Cuomo in anticipation of future favors. An early endorser was 1199's George Gresham—his parting gift to the bosses' Democratic Party. But a Cuomo mayoralty promises only more misery for working-class New York.

Gresham's endorsement of Cuomo has struck a nerve with the 1199 membership—for damn good reason. During the pandemic, Cuomo was out front squabbling with Trump over how best to save the day for the bosses while the working class and impoverished masses suffered the consequences at the hands of Covid Killer Cuomo. As governor, he had overseen the closure and consolidation of hospitals across the state. Then, his murderous decision to place Covid patients into nursing homes killed untold thousands while the nursing home owners made millions.

With the help of the 1199 and other union bureaucracies, Cuomo pushed that "we're all in this together." This was to blackmail workers, especially in healthcare, to eat abuse and never fight back because doing so would supposedly put lives at risk. But the only way to provide quality care was and is to take the fight to the bosses, who were squeezing workers and killing patients. The 1199 bureaucracy's enforcement of this blackmail wasn't an accident, but an extension of the rationale behind the union's contractual "no strike" clause. Both are a straitjacket to keep workers submissive to the interests of the bosses.

Not so long ago, Gresham was calling for Cuomo's resignation in response to sexual harassment allegations, not his many attacks on the working class. Since then, the bureaucracy has forgotten the past and flipped the script, all to help revive Cuomo's political career. Gresham has been singing Cuomo's praises, saying NYC needs "leaders who will stand up for working people, fight for good union jobs." But Cuomo has done everything he can to stomp on the working class. From imposing a wage freeze on public-sector workers to raising the retirement age, he and the rest of the Democrats inflicted serious pain that drove workers toward Trump. No matter how the 1199 bureaucracy spins it, Cuomo and the Democrats have proven themselves enemies of the working class.

The 1199 bureaucracy hails Cuomo for getting hazard pay for healthcare workers. Sure, workers needed to be paid more, but this was a good trade-off for the bosses, who refused to do anything about short-staffing and burnout—which remain widespread today. No amount of pay can hide the fact that healthcare is in a decrepit state because it is in the tight grip of a few families that have a monopoly over the industry. And they maintain their grip as Democratic politicians further privatize healthcare. In the process, workers are ground down as the union leadership does all it can to keep them chained to their oppressors.

Healthcare workers who disapprove of the union's endorsement hope that Gresham's successor Yvonne Armstrong will rescind it. But even if she does, none of the Democratic contenders will do anything to advance the interests of the working class either. The 1199 and entire SEIU bureaucracy have long been a gear in the Democratic Party machine, spending millions to get these bosses' politicians elected. Armstrong's politics are no different from Gresham's, centered on the suicidal plan of partnership between workers and management. This "partnership" has resulted in the decline of both the conditions of the working class and the state of healthcare.

With 1199's main contract expiring next year, the hospital bosses are salivating at the thought of taking away more from workers and making permanent the pandemic-era short-staffing and speedup—especially now that Trump has declared open season on unions. But the 1199 leadership says nothing about organizing a real fight. Instead, they call to elect and lobby Democratic politicians to stop budget cuts. This will only bring more disaster for the working class.

The 200,000 members of 1199 in the five boroughs and additional 250,000 outside NYC can be a major force for improving conditions and care in the hospitals and defending the working class as a whole. But to unleash this social power requires removing the shackles of the no-strike clause. Rank-and-file 1199 members must demand this clause be ripped out of the contract and that the union's ties to Cuomo and the Democrats also be cut.

This is crucial in order for the union to wage the urgently needed defensive battles against the healthcare bosses and the Trump administration. It also would expose those union leaders who would rather do the dirty work of the bosses than fight for the interests of the workers. This would not only bring forward class-struggle militants as leaders of 1199, but also inspire workers in other unions to fight for independence from the capitalist parties, both Democrat and Republican.

There are many workers who are fed up with their conditions and the way 1199SEIU is being run. The Hospital Workers Building Union Power committee has been fighting for the very perspective laid out above. This committee is looking to engage with workers who want to fight to change their situation and the state of healthcare. You can check them out here: @hwbup_nyc.

Dirty Break Serves Only the Dems

DSA: For a Clean Break Now!

The Just Break Already caucus in the DSA issued the following statement on May 21.

As the 2025 DSA National Convention approaches, the Just Break Already caucus calls on all revolutionary-minded DSAers to fight for a clean break from the Democratic Party. We fully endorse Comrade Isaac R.'s resolution, "The Clean Break: Declaring Independence from the Democrats," which both lays out the deleterious effects of DSA being in this party of Palestinian genocide and economic ruin and charts a course to ***immediately*** break that link. Although it fell short of the necessary signatures to be brought before the Convention, we urge clean break supporters to continue to circulate and discuss this resolution, which provides the strongest arguments for a clean break to date. As the Convention approaches, these discussions will be essential to cohering a solid bloc of clean break delegates at the Convention and beyond to demand the resolution get a hearing.

As the resolution makes clear, a major reason why Trump was able to win workers over in 2024 was because there was no significant, truly independent working-class opposition to Biden-Harris. At the time, JBA pushed DSA to start out on the path to fill this void and offered a means to do so: critical support to PSL's presidential campaign, which drew lines against capitalism and lesser-evilism. Instead, DSA spent months embroiled in the Democratic Party primaries in the form of building the "uncommitted" movement, which closed up shop in advance of November to rally behind Harris—with the bulk of DSA following suit. This dragged the name of socialism through the mud and did nothing to distinguish DSA from the liberals, whom workers hate.

By promoting the Democrats as the answer, DSA has played a major role in ***widening*** the gap between the working class and the left. This gap must be closed to mobilize urgently necessary defense against Trump's torrent of attacks on workers and all the oppressed. But the precondition is to drop all affiliation with the Democratic Party and reconstitute DSA independently of it. There are plenty of self-described Marxists in DSA, but the ***only*** way to ***actually be*** a Marxist in DSA is through fighting at every opportunity for an immediate break with the Dems. Those who cling to this imperialist party, notably including advocates of the dirty break strategy, only aid it at the expense of the socialist cause.

Dirty Break: A Road to Nowhere But the Democratic Party

The idea of the dirty break can be summed up as: DSA will use the Democratic Party to secure the election of "socialists" who can pass legislation on behalf of the working class and engage in other activity to build the basis for an independent workers party. It is a strategy rooted in the self-delusion that the Democratic Party is the horse and DSA the rider manipulating this major institution of the most powerful capitalist class on Earth into making itself an incubator for socialism. Nonetheless, this is the majority position in DSA today and the main obstacle preventing the organization from positively contributing in any kind of way to building a workers party.

The notion that these electeds are the key to winning reforms for working people and the oppressed is a dead end. AOC was elected to "abolish ICE" and fight for Medicare for All and a Green New Deal. What has she done? Parlayed these lying campaign promises into a bigger seat in the Democratic Party (smearing pro-Palestinian protesters, hustling for Biden/Harris and so on), not delivered anything to the working class. Now she

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Zohran...

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who gets the barely livable, dilapidated, roach-infested apartments. All the while, landlords are making a killing.

Improving housing means taking a sledgehammer to segregation. By keeping black people squarely at the bottom of society, big landlords get away with degrading conditions across the board and avoid any responsibility by pitting working people against one another. This is what makes the ghettos and barrios a fertile breeding ground for anti-immigrant reaction. The only way to unite the class is to wage a struggle for quality, integrated housing throughout the five boroughs entirely at the expense of the slumlords and their financial backers. Instead, Zohran, who has made tackling the cost-of-living crisis the centerpiece of his campaign, proposes the half measure of a rent freeze on rent-stabilized apartments that are already insanely expensive. This would do nothing to fix the wretched conditions that the majority of workers live in or to address racial segregation.

But Zohran cannot possibly deliver even on this half measure. Is the housing lobby that rakes in billions in rents going to willingly stop raking in cash, much less pay for affordable housing, because the mayor wags his finger? No! It would take a real mobilization of working-class power threatening the property rights of the real estate magnates to secure a meaningful long-term citywide rent freeze. It would take massive public works projects and the seizure of unoccupied high-end apartments and commercial offices to get quality, integrated housing at a time when Trump is slashing every restraint on big landlords.

Gabe

Zohran's plan to fund his proposals is to "tax the rich," but he knows the rich have endless loopholes—it's how they got their money. Plus, playing with the tax rate lets the rich pass the bill onto the working class. One example of how this would play out is congestion pricing, a ***direct tax on working-class commuters which Zohran supports***. It is impossible to improve housing while tied to the very capitalist forces that thrive off the parasitic real estate industry!

The unions should use the housing crisis as a starting point to organize tenants and those facing evictions. The fight for housing for all can start to bridge the divide between segregated neighborhoods and show people that union muscle is the best way to defend themselves. Public services are only as strong as the working class that needs and uses them!

Left Must Choose: Another Bill de Blasio or the Working Class?

The petty-bourgeois left, ***not*** the working class, has embraced Zohran's campaign and swoon over his "progressive" credentials. Meanwhile, workers are stranded without any working-class alternative in the general election for mayor! The left—stuck debating the relative merits of building socialism "inside" the system through Zohran or "outside" through a movement to pressure him to the left—remains a non-factor among workers.

On the "inside," we have the left-wing DSA caucuses: Marxist Unity Group and Reform and Revolution. They preach socialism on the one hand, while clinging to the Democrats on the other. Their support to Zohran is part of their "dirty break" strategy of trying to vote in socialism through the imperialist Democratic Party. The only thing this has ever accomplished is to corral socialist-minded youth into the Democratic Party and to turn off workers from socialism through association with the hated Democrats! Instead of trying to get a bunch of genocidal imperialists to wave the red flag, there must be a ***clean break*** with the Democrats—including all electeds like Zohran—to advance the fight for socialism (see above article).

On the "outside," we have the likes of Socialist Alternative (SA), which offers the friendly advice that "Mamdani should run as an independent socialist" and Left Voice, which claims that the movement around Zohran is anti-capitalist—if only he wasn't a Democrat. These "socialists" have clearly learned nothing from Bernie and every other "progressive" capitalist politician that they have drooled over.

Zohran has made it perfectly clear that he wants to revive the Democratic Party, and to think that he can be reasoned with to do anything else is delusional. Zohran has not given the smallest pretense of wanting to build anything close to a workers party, much less overthrow the capitalist class. Zohran running on the same liberal program outside the Democratic Party would not be a step forward, but would only make it easier for him to scam the working class and create yet another obstacle to actually building a workers party. In proposing this course, SA and Left Voice reveal they have nothing to offer workers.

The choice stands before the left: build illusions in Zohran or build working-class unity and power. Leftists should fight to ***build*** the independent socialist campaign that they claim to stand for. But instead, they are trying to put lipstick on a pig. Only by exposing "progressive" swindlers like Zohran can socialists rebuild the working-class movement into a force that can really transform this city. ■

SPART 4 TALK

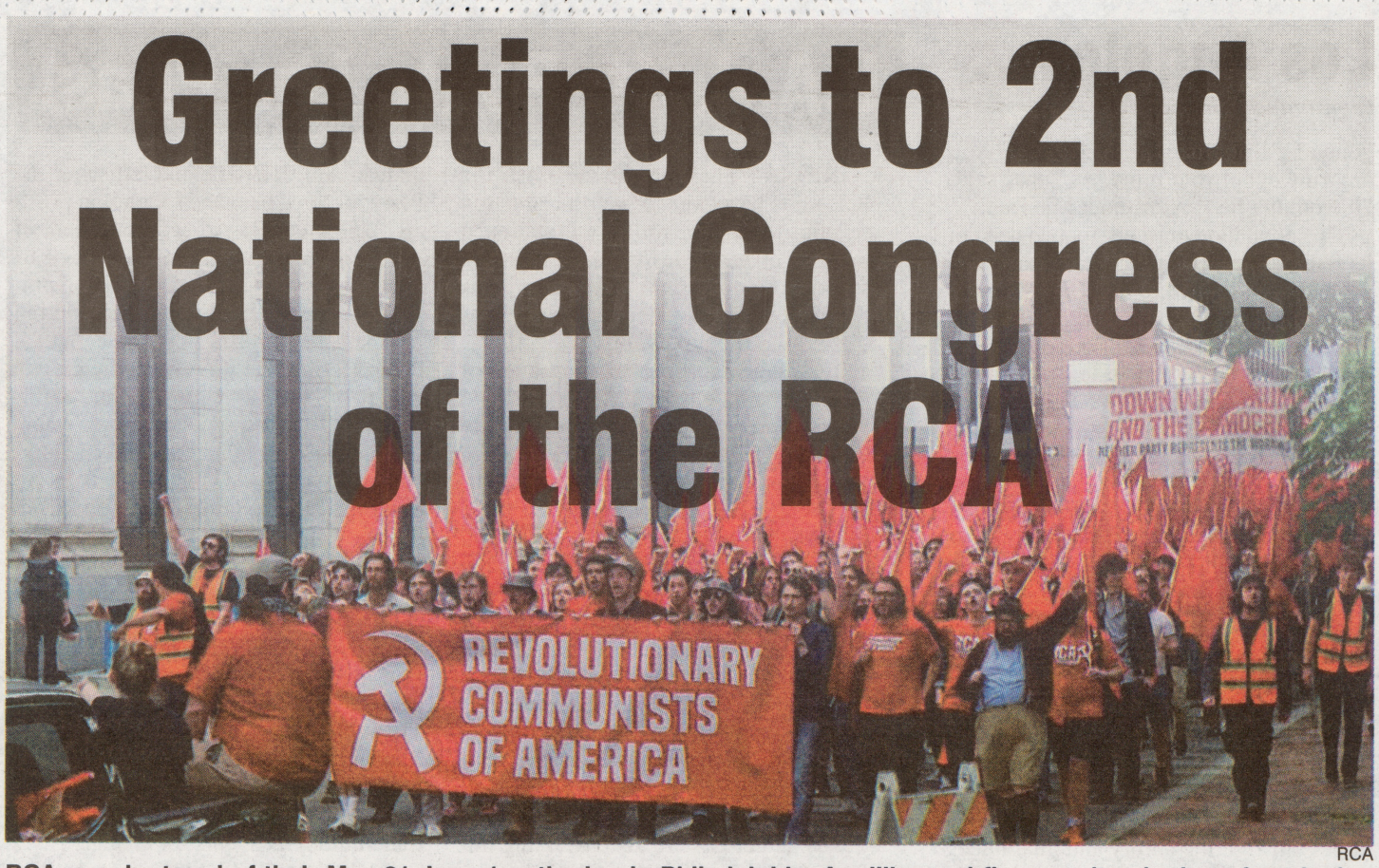
English-language podcast of the Spartacist League

iclfi.org/sparttalk

New Issue

spartacist.org/en/70

Greetings to 2nd National Congress of the RCA



RCA

RCA march at end of their May 31-June 1 gathering in Philadelphia. A million red flags can't substitute for winning the working class.

The Spartacist League/U.S. sent the greetings below on May 30 to the recent congress of the Revolutionary Communists of America.

Dear comrades,

The Spartacist League/U.S. sends greetings to the Second National Congress of the RCA. As U.S. imperialism turns the screws on us all, we believe it is essential for the Marxist left to debate our perspectives and look to engage in united-front defense (as we did outside the Pakistani embassies in New York, Los Angeles, London and elsewhere in defense of your comrades in South Asia). In this spirit, we want to address your congress document, "Where Is America Going?", which we read with interest. We agree that the most urgent problem of our time is cohering a revolutionary leadership rooted in the working class and that liberalism only leads to a dead end for the working masses.

But the whole question is what to do to concretely bring forward such a leadership. And this is where our fundamental difference lies. A revolutionary leadership will be built not by simply repeating red slogans and waving red flags, but by directly engaging in struggles with a clear understanding of the class forces at play and taking head-on the obstacles that hold those struggles back. In order to help strengthen the Marxist left's ability to prepare the working class for all that is ahead and shape the course of events, we offer our criticisms for your consideration.

The World Situation

Your analysis of the world situation resembles ours in certain empirical observations. You rightly note that "the liberal-imperialist mask of the so-called 'Western values,' 'defense of democracy,' and the 'inviolability of human rights and national borders' have been unceremoniously dropped" and "US imperialism can no longer afford the smiling mask of hypocrisy."

But while you recognize the obvious fact that the liberal world order is in tatters, when it comes to the consequences of this tectonic shift ***within the U.S.***, you explicitly deny that society has shifted to the right, offering: "What is really taking place is an almighty polarization in both directions, reflecting the widespread rejection of the status quo." To prove this, you cite opinion polls and votes against abortion bans in order to deny that liberalism propelled the working class to the right. These votes are evidence of the many contradictions within the working class, but do not negate the overall rightward shift. As we noted in our own document, "Where Is the U.S. Going?" (*WV* No. 1183, 18 December 2024): "Many working people who went for Trump out of legitimate anger believe that protectionism, mass deportations and Trump's strongman approach will advance their interests."

The task of communists is to tap into the vast reservoir of anger, and its many contradictions, and give it a working-class expression, turning it against Trump and the liberals. Instead, you attribute to the working class a far higher consciousness than it has—which can only be disorienting. The same goes for your proclamation that the main task today is to "prepare for revolution!" You insist on this in a period when the working class is not only on the defensive, but also more separated from the left than ever. The reason for this separation was the left's refusal to offer an alternative to liberalism in the post-Soviet period—making them indistinguishable in the eyes of the working class from the hated liberals, who made their lives a living hell while berating them for being backward.

The logic of your position is that there is no need for revolutionaries to intervene into and guide the struggles of the workers and oppressed because, after all, everyone is becoming a communist. All this leaves you with no road to the masses. U.S. imperialism is on a rampage, hell-bent on shoring up its slipping global position. In the face of worsening genocide in Gaza, all the repression against pro-Palestine activists, ramped-up deportations and racist cop terror, union-busting of federal

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Why Transit Workers Should Defend Pro-Palestine Activists

We reprint below an April 26 leaflet issued by Transit Workers for a Fighting Union, which was widely distributed at NYC May Day rallies and to subway and bus workers in TWU Local 100.

Trump and his MAGA regime have launched vicious attacks almost daily against immigrants, foreign-born students and many other vulnerable sectors of society. As New York City transit workers, it is in our direct interest to actively defend the victims of these attacks, not least because we also are in the crosshairs. Recent mass layoffs of federal workers and Trump's threats to pull funding of MTA projects are just a taste of what's to come, as America's racist rulers strive to preserve their sick profit system at home and imperial domination abroad.

Right now, our own union, Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 is weak, divided and isolated. As the bosses continue to undercut our jobs, wages and working conditions, we have every reason to prepare for our own defense by linking up with others under attack. If government forces succeed in attacking immigrants and pro-Palestinian protesters and getting away with it, they will only be emboldened to attack us. Transit workers defending those targeted today by the government would not only improve their chances against the witchhunters, but also help our union break out of its isolation and increase our fighting capacity.

Transit Workers for a Fighting Union
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@TWFU-NYC • TWFU
@twfu_now

Columbia University grad student Mahmoud Khalil, kidnapped and shipped off to an ICE holding pen in Louisiana; union construction worker Kilmar Ábrego García, abducted and deported directly to El Salvador's "terrorist" mega-prison; doctoral student Rümeysa Öztürk, grabbed by cops on a Boston sidewalk, shackled and whisked off to another Louisiana dungeon. The U.S. ruling class wants to terrorize the population by searing these acts and images into our minds. They want to silence pro-Palestine activists and to force immigrant workers into the shadows, in order to make all of us work harder and suffer even more.

The government's mounting ICE raids, deportations and anti-immigrant hysteria should be a wake-up call to NYC transit workers. Thousands of us are immigrants or the daughters and sons of immigrants, who know firsthand how precarious our rights are in this country. From the moment the TWU first organized this city's subway and bus workforce, the union had to fight for its survival against the bosses' anti-immigrant attacks, then aimed largely against Irish and Italian workers who were not citizens.

Transit Workers for a Fighting Union (TWFU) calls on all our union brothers and sisters to demand: ***Freedom for Khalil, Öztürk and all victims of political repression!*** Pro-Palestine activists were some of the first and foremost victims of Trump's regime, which picked up right where Biden's Democrats left off in supporting Israel's genocide against the Palestinians. The carnage in Gaza ignited campus protests against Israeli and U.S. war crimes. Student protesters then had to deal with a tsunami of Zionist lies smearing them as anti-Jewish, which has since turned into a government witchhunt against student activists, professors and even the universities themselves.

The connection between cracking down on pro-Palestine protesters and attacking unions was made clear at Columbia. One day before contract negotiations were set to start, the administration expelled and fired Grant Miner, President of Student Workers of Columbia/UAW Local 2710. Brother Miner is a Jewish Ph.D. student who was prominent in campus protests against the war in Gaza. In addition to Miner, Columbia hit 22 student activists with expulsions, suspensions and taking away their college degrees. We say: ***Reinstate Grant Miner and all suspended, expelled and victimized pro-Palestine students!***

Local 100 transit workers also need to condemn the recent actions of TWU International President John Samuelsen, who has backed the bosses' and Zionists' attacks on pro-Palestine protesters at Columbia. After students protesting genocide in Gaza took over Columbia's Hamilton Hall last spring, Samuelsen went on Fox News to threaten legal action and slander the protesters, who in fact let a couple of TWU-represented custodians leave the building unscathed within 30 minutes. More recently, Samuelsen howled that one of "his members" was allegedly harmed during a pro-Palestine protest at Barnard College.

Nothing about this adds up: Seriously injured subway and bus workers have a hard time even getting a union rep on the phone, yet our union's International President rushes to highlight the trauma supposedly felt by two union members. He did so to add his voice to the sinister bipartisan campus crackdown on pro-Palestine activists and civil liberties in general. Samuelsen's actions feign concern for his "blue collar" members while actually trying to drive a wedge between workers and students fighting for a just cause. For someone who claims that Irish revolutionary socialist James Connolly is one of his heroes, Samuelsen has been acting more like a supporter of British and U.S. imperialism.

Transit Workers for a Fighting Union is committed to building a completely new leadership for the TWU, one that doesn't make backroom deals with the bosses and their politicians, but rather fights for our members and the entire working class. We seek to link up with other unions—like TWU Local 241 at Columbia, TWU Local 264 at Barnard, SWC-UAW Local 2710 and others—and overcome artificial divisions in order to prepare ourselves for hard defensive struggle.

We demand:

- ***Hands off all pro-Palestine activists!***
- ***Down with ICE raids and anti-immigrant attacks!***
- ***Defend free speech and civil liberties!***
- ***An injury to one is an injury to all!***

Los Angeles...

(continued from page 1)

gonna be limited to the "bad ones," you are truly out of your mind. As Tupac said, "It wouldn't be L.A. without Mexicans."

This escalation must be stopped dead in its tracks! We must join together and take a stand: ***No deportations! ICE, National Guard and Marines out of L.A.! Free all detainees and protesters!*** The militant protesters must not be left to fend for themselves. We need to organize the strongest possible defense of immigrants in order to beat back Trump. The question is: how?

To assemble the force to do that, the key is to win L.A.'s working class to the fight. Right now, the pressure is intense for workers to focus on their individual situations and keep their heads down. But doing so will accomplish nothing except to leave them more vulnerable tomorrow. The paralysis in the face of Trump's attack must be broken by stressing that absent a collective fight today, the country will only descend further into chaos. Having a section of the working class that is terrorized and forced into the shadows undermines our fighting ability and guarantees that all of us will continue to be screwed.

To unite our ranks in struggle, the divisions among us cannot be ignored. Many workers (including Latinos and immigrants) voted for Trump because they believed that their lives would improve if all the "illegals" were rounded up and thrown out of the country, opening up jobs and resources for those that have been here longer. Every day, this country just gets more and more unlivable, as life's necessities become increasingly out of reach—whether that be quality housing, healthcare, jobs; hell, even the price of groceries is skyrocketing. Workers in L.A. and New York City cannot even afford to live where they work, enduring hours-long commutes every day just to barely scrape by.

These concerns cannot be dismissed. There is a way to defend the livelihoods of both U.S.-born and immigrant workers, but not if they are at one another's throats. The result of the anti-immigrant crackdown will not be more jobs for U.S.-born workers, but jobs under worse conditions. All workers will be in a weaker position to even hold on to what they have now. If these attacks go unchallenged, the state authorities will be emboldened to more aggressively target all of us. ***Do not let these attacks go unanswered! Labor: defend yourself! An injury to one is an injury to all!***

But despite issuing statements of solidarity with David Huerta, who faces a federal conspiracy charge, SEIU and other union leaders are holding back labor from any real display of its power in defense of him and everyone else swept up by the cops and *la migra*. This is because the trade-union bureaucrats are in bed with the same people who have presided over the destruction of L.A. for decades: the Democrats. After Trump's election, SEIU California campaigned to encourage Karen Bass to make L.A. a "sanctuary city." The same Karen Bass just approved the hiring of nearly 250 more cops to aid and abet ICE, crack the skulls of protesters and terrorize black and brown Angelenos! That's one hell of a black-brown coalition! Bass and Gavin Newsom cooperate with the anti-immigrant crackdown, even while they posture as tough on Trump, giving him some lip over sending in the National Guard…because LAPD was already doing the job.

The whole concept of "sanctuary cities" popularized during the "resistance" of Trump's first term was a Democratic Party lie to rope in activists and working people, while maintaining the status quo of deteriorating cities and undocumented immigrants as a cheap pool of labor. This is what Bass, Newsom and other Democrats mean when they say they love immigrants…for super-exploitation. And when the Dems retook the White House, Biden deported so many that Trump is now eager to outdo him. While Bass objects to ICE raids, it is because she prefers roundups less disruptive to business. An alliance with the people who have done nothing but cause misery for L.A. will get you nowhere and make it impossible to win over the workers—who Bass and Newsom drove into Trump's arms—to the defense of immigrants.

Over the decades, the Democrats in L.A. have done a skillful job of pitting black people against Latinos in competition for the scraps on offer. This has fueled racial division and made black people distrust Latinos and feel they have no interest in fighting against the current raids. But this couldn't be farther from the truth. Everyone knows that when the state attacks, black people are always first or next in line. The struggles of black people, Latinos and the entire working class either advance together or fall back separately. We have no more room for the latter.

Trump has declared war on Los Angeles. There is no time to waste. Workers must step up, to defend immigrants and themselves. The heavily immigrant, 60,000-strong SEIU Local 721 L.A. County workers have been working without a contract. Their leadership sent them back to work after a two-day strike at the end of April with nothing to show for it. ***The strike must be resumed!*** A fight by Local 721 members against their Democratic bosses for a decent contract linked to the fight against the deportations would be a real step toward building a movement that can both make L.A. livable and stop ICE cold. This would be a beacon to other key unionized workforces in L.A. and beyond to take up the fight to stop the raids. Workers cannot wait for their leaders to initiate such action but will have to push forward against them. For example, even though thousands of trade unionists turned out at the SEIU-initiated rally at Grand Park on June 9, union officials instructed them to disperse rather than march to the courthouse where Huerta was being arraigned.

Union organizers should fan out across the city to intersect and organize non-union work sites before ICE shows up. Then, when they try to carry out their raids to sow terror among the workforce, the workers will have the backing of the unions to keep these businesses closed until all those detained and arrested are released. Unions should also be prepared to extend protection to any non-union workplace raided to give it the support it needs to keep operations shut down for as long as needed. Every union in L.A. should launch immigrant defense committees independent of the bosses, if they have not done so already, to mobilize any time and any place against ICE operations.

The ILWU International leadership put out a solidarity statement on behalf of Huerta but has done nothing to back it up. Longshore workers themselves must take the initiative; otherwise, the labor movement risks being thrown back. Many port workers live in Paramount and other neighborhoods under siege by ICE. ILWU Local 13 could change the whole terrain if it were to show Trump that he is not the only one who can choke off trade to advance his class interests.

Union leaders claim that pre-existing contracts tie their hands from mobilizing the unions in a show of strength. But Trump is busy rewriting the rules of engagement and showing that he does not give a damn about democratic rights, much less the rights of immigrants. Clinging to rules that no longer apply is suicide for the unions, just like limiting defense of immigrants to simply ensuring they "know their rights" is as useful as a band-aid on a bullet wound. Just look at Kilmar Ábrego García, a legal resident and SMART union member who was deported to El Salvador, only to be brought back to the U.S. after three months and put on trial for human trafficking! Clearly, knowing your rights and even having all the proper paperwork is not enough. While it is good that "ICE watch" patrols of immigrant communities are taking place, a few carloads of activists are also not enough to faze the military storming the streets.

There must be an equivalent response by our side. Labor must come out as a real force. Every worker has an interest in standing up and fighting back against the ICE gestapo, who are showing up at their workplaces and hauling away their class brothers and sisters. The attacks from Trump are only going to get worse, and a divided working class will suffer the consequences. For all those who want to fight back, turn to the organized working class, which can actually put an end to ICE's terror.

- *No deportations!*
- *Free all detainees and protesters!*
- *Drop all charges!*
- *ICE, National Guard and Marines out of L.A.!*
- *Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!*
- *For working-class mobilization to stop Trump's attacks!*

L.A. Left: Ponte Las Pilas!

JUNE 16—The protests against the ICE raids have waned; yet the situation remains tense. The military is stationed in parts of L.A. Mayor Bass's cops are strictly enforcing her curfew. The raids themselves are ongoing, and fear grips the immigrant population.

Two days ago, tens of thousands of people turned out in L.A. for the "No Kings" protest organized nationally by 50501 to "take back our flag" from Trump and pump blood into a Democratic "resistance." We were there to push for a break with these liberal politics and warn that decades of such protests helped put immigrants in their present precarious situation. Instead of going down this dead-end road again, we argued that all labor must be mobilized independently of the Democrats to fight Trump. While many individual workers were at the protest, union contingents were scarce; and the organized working class has not taken the lead.

The authorities are also harassing immigrant rights groups and the left. Senator Josh Hawley has sent letters to the mainstream CHIRLA and leftists of the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) and Unión del Barrio accusing them of "bankrolling civil unrest." The FBI arrested Centro CSO activist and Teamster Alejandro Orellana for distributing face shields to protesters under attack by projectiles. He was charged with two counts of "conspiracy to commit criminal disorder" and faces up to ten years in prison!

The task posed for the left is to build the broadest possible united-front defense. It is good that groups like Socialist Alternative (SA) and Left Voice have written in defense of PSL and others. But the left is making an effective defense difficult. They fatuously cheerlead the "uprising," while peddling the same tired liberal strategy of yesteryear. They all criticize the Dems and capitalism and call for strikes for immigrant rights. But they look to the pro-capitalist leadership of social movements and the trade unions as agents for change.

SA praises 50501 for calling nationwide protests while noting that "any sustained movement will also need a bold, clear program of demands…and a strategy to win them." Of course, 50501 has a strategy…it's called boost the Democratic Party. Refusing to combat this obstacle is a recipe for defeat.

Left Voice went from claiming that earlier protests "won a historic victory" to hailing the "No Kings" marches as an "incredibly progressive development." They rejoice that tens of thousands are in the streets, no matter that the protest organizers' liberalism is a barrier to actual class struggle and can lead only to demoralization. To top it off, they call on "the leaders of the Teamsters, the UAW, and SEIU" to "build the unity of labor and social movements against Trump." But the only way to build such unity is through exposure of these class traitors, who perpetuate divisions among workers. As Marx said, first time tragedy, second time farce—third time…WTF?

The stakes are high. Workers themselves must take the initiative so the labor movement is not thrown back. The energy and resources of the left must be put into fighting to mobilize workers in concrete labor action and to back up community self-defense efforts before it's too late. ***Ponte las pilas! Get it together!***

Dovarganes/AP

June 9 labor rally in Los Angeles demanding release of SEIU California president David Huerta after his arrest and beating by ICE.

WV Photo

Los Angeles, June 14: Spartacists and PDC fight for united working-class struggle to stop mass deportations.

No Deportations!

Partisan Defense Committee

ICE: Hands Off the United Farm Workers!

The Partisan Defense Committee released the following statement on May 17.

The government's ICE raids, deportations and anti-immigrant hysteria are being used as a dagger against the trade unions. On May 2 in Western New York, ICE agents stopped a bus carrying farm workers organized by the United Farm Workers (UFW), called out the names of 14 including prominent union activists and detained them for deportation. In March, Alfredo "Lelo" Juarez Zeferino, leader of the farm workers union Familias Unidas por la Justicia in Washington state, was detained by ICE for deportation. In a May 8 letter protesting the detentions in New York, the PDC stated: "This blatant act of government union-busting is an attack on the entire workers movement." ***An injury to one is an injury to all!***

The racist roundup of immigrant trade unionists only underscores that the labor movement has a vital interest in actively defending all the victims of the Trump administration's many-sided attacks. Divided we fall! The government is going after the largely immigrant, isolated and vulnerable agricultural workers to open the door for attacks against the entire working class. Deportations put the winds in the sails of repression and compel immigrant workers and their descendants to not cause any trouble for the bosses—which is bad for all of us. If they keep getting away with massive arrests and deportations of immigrants, government forces will only be emboldened in broadly attacking organized labor. Just look at the mass layoffs of government workers and shredding of their union contracts.

Pitting immigrant and native workers against each other only serves the bosses. The battle should not be U.S.-born workers against immigrant workers to divide up scraps off the bosses' table, but a fight by ***all*** workers against the bosses to make real gains and raise conditions for the class as a whole. A drive to organize the unorganized, especially in industries with a heavy immigrant component, would go a long way toward protecting these workers and strengthening the trade union movement's position to fight.

As a first step, labor needs to mobilize broadly in defense of our brother and sister unionists who are detained and facing deportation. We are calling on the unions and their members to take action on behalf of these workers. Send protest letters and statements, raise the call in your union, donate to their legal defense, mobilize labor contingents for rallies against the deportations and for broader collective action. ***An injury to one is an injury to all! Hands off the UFW! Free the detainees! No deportations!*** ■

An Injury to One Is an Injury to All!

For International Class-Struggle Defense!

WV Photo

New York City, June 17: Left Voice, PDC, SL and others at united-front protest against French state repression.

Harsh winds of repression are blowing across the world. Unionists, leftists and especially immigrants and defenders of Palestine are all coming under attack. Here in the U.S., pro-Palestine activists like Mahmoud Khalil have been arrested and face deportation or prison. In the opening salvo of a war on immigrants and labor, SEIU California president David Huerta was arrested during a militarized ICE raid in L.A. The aim is clear—to silence the left and divide the working class, the ultimate target of the state's repressive measures. What's needed is international united-front defense based on the power of labor.

France: The French state has unleashed sweeping repression against pro-Palestinian activists, trade unionists and leftists. Among those targeted are **Anasse Kazib**, railway worker, trade-union activist and spokesperson for Révolution Permanente (which is affiliated with Left Voice in the U.S.) and **Gaël Quirante**, spokesperson for the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste-Révolutionnaires, pro-Palestinian activist and former postman fired for his union activities.

Kazib is charged with "apology for terrorism" over a tweet in support of Palestine—and faces up to seven years in prison. His trial date is June 18. Gaël is being dragged into court over a militant strike that occurred over ***ten years ago*** and faces up to five years in prison. Gaël and four other postal workers went on trial June 12-13, with 600 coming out in support. The next court date is set for July 10. We have contributed to Kazib's defense at gofundme.com/f/solidarite-anasse-kazib and Quirante's at helloasso.com/associations/les-ami-e-s-de-sud-poste-92/formulaires/1/en.

Rodrigue Petitot, popular leader of the movement against the cost-of-living crisis in the French colony of Martinique, was jailed last year and then given a one-year suspended sentence for confronting the colonial authorities. The state appealed, seeking to throw him back behind bars. On June 12, the court reduced his sentence to six months, which he had already served. Although Rodrigue is now free, he never should have served a day. **Rima Hassan**, a Palestinian born in a refugee camp and now a Member of the European Parliament for La France Insoumise, has faced a racist backlash because of her support for Palestine, including police interrogation and threats to strip her of her French citizenship. Last week, she was among the Freedom Flotilla activists detained by Israeli authorities, but is now released and back in France. **Georges Ibrahim Abdallah**, revolutionary fighter for Palestine, remains imprisoned for over 40 years, with a government appeal to overturn a court order to release him due for a ruling on June 19. Georges is a recipient of the Partisan Defense Committee's class-war prisoner stipend fund.

In opposition to the show trials of Quirante and Kazib—and the wider repression of the left—the PDC and our fraternal organizations internationally called protests in front of French embassies and consulates around the world. The international labor movement must be made aware of these cases in order to bring the greatest possible pressure to bear on the French state to drop all the charges. On June 17, the PDC joined with Left Voice and others at united-front protests in New York and Los Angeles. We also rallied in Chicago and San Francisco.

South Africa: South African trade unionist and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) member **Xolani Khoza** faces charges of incitement to commit terrorism, public violence and intimidation for posting a TikTok video calling for a national protest against the government. His persecution is a blatant assault on freedom of speech in the service of the "Government of National Unity" (GNU)—a coalition of the ANC and the openly pro-imperialist and white-dominated Democratic Alliance. It also threatens to brand all who would resist the attacks of the GNU as "terrorists."

Our comrades of Spartacist/South Africa have joined with local EFF chapters to form the Committee to Defend Xolani Khoza, which has organized protests at his court appearances and seeks to mobilize greater forces. Endorsers of protests have included the General Industries Workers Union of South Africa and the Workers and Socialist Party. The PDC held a united-front protest at the South African consulate in New York on May 9 to express our solidarity. The Chicago UAW Civil & Human Rights Council has sent a protest letter on Xolani's behalf. It is important that other unions in the U.S. come out in support of Xolani as well. His defense desperately needs funds to cover legal fees and the cost of raising public awareness of his case. The PDC and our fraternal organizations have donated and urge you and your union to do the same. Donate here: backabuddy.co.za/campaign/defend-xolani-khoza.

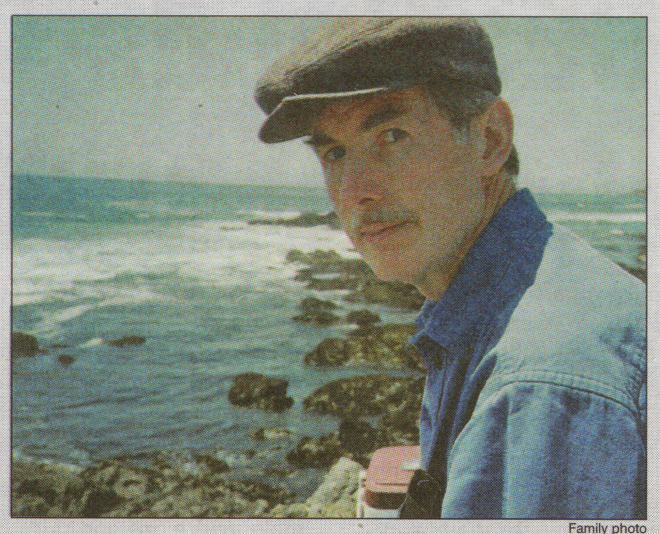
South Asia: The reactionary military flare-up between India and Pakistan has brought increased repression of leftists in the region. On May 19, the PDC joined a rally called by the Revolutionary Communists of America (RCA) at the Pakistani consulate in New York City. We demanded the release of arrested leaders of **Inqalabi Communist Party**, the RCA's Pakistani comrades, and the **Awaami Action Committee Gilgit Baltistan (AAC-GB)**. Our fraternal organizations in Canada, Australia, Germany and Britain have also joined protests demanding the release of AAC-GB leader **Ehsan Ali** and other activists. Ali has since been thrown back into prison from a hospital despite his doctors' objections. At all these protests, we have also called to free former Pakistani prime minister **Imran Khan**, who was thrown behind bars because he went against U.S. diktats. The repression of Khan and his supporters is linked to the overall increase in political repression and imperialist subjugation of Pakistan.

Sweden: In February, the dockworkers union Svenska Hamnarbetarförbundet conducted a six-day boycott of military cargo destined for Israel. The day before the boycott began, the union's national deputy chairman **Erik Helgeson** was fired on bogus "national security" grounds. Unions internationally, including ILWU Local 10 in the Bay Area, have taken up the defense of the Swedish longshore union and demanded Helgeson's reinstatement. It is a good thing that unions are defending Helgeson. But this must be extended to defense of the Palestinians themselves, crucially by the ILWU launching its own boycott of military shipments to Israel.

Philippines: Indigenous people from the Molbog, Palaw'an and Cagayanen communities are fighting attempts by billionaire Ramon S. Ang's San Miguel Corp. (SMC) to seize Bugsuk Island to build a resort complex for the bourgeoisie. On May 15, the **Marihangin 10** leaders of the mainly Molbog villagers were arrested on charges of "grave coercion." Our comrades in the Spartacist Group Pilipinas have issued a statement: "Defend the Marihangin 10! Drop all charges! Oppose the land grab by SMC!"

The PDC and ICL have been arguing within the left for united-front defense. For too long, it has not been the norm for small left groups to collaborate in defense work. That is a recipe for defeat. We must not let our political differences stand in the way of a united struggle to defend all targets of state repression. ***An injury to one is an injury to all!*** Only in pursuing such a course can the socialist movement confront head-on the strong winds of reaction, re-establish itself as a pole against the discredited liberals and reforge working-class organizations into a real fighting force. ■

Al Nelson



Family photo

1936-2022

In the brief obituary for Al Nelson published shortly after he died (*Spartacist* No. 67, August 2022), we stated: "A more comprehensive treatment of Al Nelson's life as a Trotskyist cadre will appear in a future issue." What took so long? The political lives of our founding cadres cannot be properly evaluated separate from the party they built. The International Communist League's return to authentic Trotskyism required extensive internal party discussion to understand and break with decades of political disorientation. This critical review of our past is an ongoing process for the purpose of honing our interventions ***today***.

The ICL's Eighth International Conference dug into our degeneration and collapse in the post-Soviet world, and its conclusions are published in *Spartacist* No. 68 (September 2023). Up until then, as the most formidable central party leader in the 1990s, Al had been resented and blamed for many of the problems in this period of party history. But the truth is that Al's methods mirrored the party's strengths and weaknesses. Filling out more of this picture, a recent plenum of the Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee examined the party's work in the 1980s, which enabled us to finally write this obituary.

From Racist Philadelphia to Revolutionary Marxism

Al Nelson is a huge part of our history. He was the last surviving party veteran going back to the Revolutionary Tendency (forerunner to the Spartacist League). He was elected to the SL/U.S. Central Committee at its founding conference in 1966 and, after the founding of the International in 1979, to the International Executive Committee. Lessons drawn from Al's lifetime of party work have enduring value for revolutionaries today.

Al spoke about his personal history and development as a Marxist at a 1991 commemoration of his 30th year since joining the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA), the youth group of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), and subsequently the Revolutionary Tendency (RT). In his own words, Al said:

> "I came to adolescence in racially segregated Philadelphia during the Cold War.... My first break from the status quo was a personal break with the pervasive racism that saturated the white ethnic Catholic working-class area I came from. This occurred in my late teens with the kind and patient assistance of the only black person I ever knew in that rotten city.... I drew no political generalizations and simply rejected the racist premises that black people were inferior.
>
> "After being drafted into the army in June 1959, I spent two years stationed at an army hospital not far from Philadelphia. This was a period of transition for me, and it was here that I eventually became political.... Trotsky said that the army is a crystallized reflection of the society it defends, and so it is. Having initially intended to become an officer, I came to hate the army and despise the government."

Al was introduced to the ideas of socialism and Trotskyism by a fellow soldier who lived off-base and received leftist publications. He concluded that Trotskyism was the programmatic continuity with the Bolshevik Party and the 1917 October Revolution. He eagerly read his friend's subscription to the SWP's *Militant* and other periodicals every week. He said, "Finally, reluctantly I accepted the conclusion that the source of every one of the world's problems that had been weighing so heavily on me was the social system of capitalism, and that it would take a revolution by a Bolshevik type of party to get rid of it." Discharged from the Army in 1961, Al made his way to New York to join the SWP.

Al was invited to an SWP social, which led to an invitation to dinner with Jim Robertson (founder of the Spartacist League). Jim put Al on a systematic reading program of basic Marxist texts. They agreed that if he read one or two books a week, Jim and his companion would give him a home-cooked meal and discuss the books. Al recalled being "electrified" by Lenin's *State and Revolution*:

> "Now I saw my army experience in a new light, and I understood the role of the police we had hated so much in Philly. Now I knew what the state was and that it defended the interests of the ruling class, and why only a revolution could completely smash it in order for the working class to take power."

When Al joined the YSA in 1961, he discovered that he had walked into a raging faction fight waged by the RT against the SWP's uncritical adulation of Fidel Castro and its refusal to intervene in the civil rights movement to win radicals who were fed up with the go-slow preachers and pacifists. The RT's starting point was the fight for socialist revolution, led by Trotskyist parties built through active participation in mass struggles and opposition to the misleaders who appeased and propped up capitalist class rule. Al joined the RT and got an accelerated lesson in faction fighting for revolutionary principles. The SWP bureaucratically expelled him in 1964. He and other expelled RT members went on to found the SL.

The party question was paramount for Al. His 1995 presentation was selected as the introduction for the second edition of the Spartacist pamphlet, *Lenin and the Vanguard Party*:

> "The construction of revolutionary leadership capable of leading the working class internationally—that's what we mean by the 'party question'.... Until the working class solves the problem of creating the revolutionary party as the conscious expression of the historic process, the issue remains undecided. For Marxists, therefore, it is the most important question of all—the question of the party."

Al was inspired by the writings of James P. Cannon, the founder of American Trotskyism. At the commemoration of his 30 years in the Trotskyist movement, he cited Cannon:

> "The ideas of Marxism are stronger than the parties they create, and they never fail to find representatives in the old organization to lead the work of reconstruction. These are the continuators, the Marxists who remain faithful to the banner, the uncorrupted revolutionists obliged by circumstances to reinstate the old program and bring it up to date in a new party."

Cannon's statement resounds loudly in the ICL today. So too does a 1964 letter to all YSA members signed by Al Nelson and other expelled members of the RT: "Although the YSA and SWP have gone ***very far*** on the road of political revision and bureaucratic organizational practice, the process is not irreversible."

Defend the Cuban Revolution!

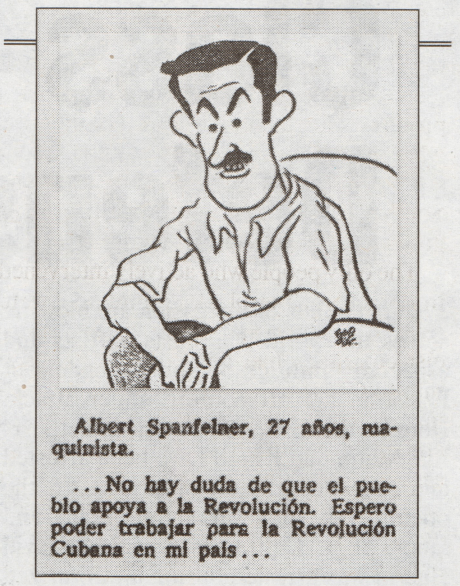
In Cuba, Al applied the politics he had deeply learned through the RT faction fight. In defiance of a State Department ban on travel to Cuba, Al spent two months there in 1964 on an extensive tour with a group of leftists, black nationalists and liberals. He made a point by visibly carrying a copy of Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*. He was noticed and sought out by Cuban Trotskyists (followers of Juan Posadas), whose leaders had been jailed, their printing presses seized and the type that had been set for a Spanish-language edition of Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution* smashed. These comrades had honorable political histories in the underground movement against the hated dictator Fulgencio Batista. They were combatants in the Cuban Revolution, including the final insurrection, in their capacity as union militants and members of their neighborhood Committees for Defense of the Revolution.

At a presentation by Che Guevara to tour participants, Al was called on in the question and answer period. Despite loud heckling, Al challenged the haloed hero of the Cuban Revolution. Through his translator, Che silenced the heckling: "Comrade Guevara says let the man speak." Al got right to the point: "Don't you think it would be better if political criticism inside the framework of support to the revolution were handled politically rather than by suppression of views, as was done to the Cuban Trotskyists?" The translator replied: "Comrade Guevara says, 'that's not a question'." Al said, "Well, ask comrade Guevara to answer it anyway."

Guevara replied with timeworn Stalinist slander and innuendo: "I agree with your statement, but the Cuban Trotskyists are not inside the Revolution, but only divisionists. I did not see them in any mountains, I did not see them dead in any city battle. They appeared after the revolution was over, giving instructions on what to do—in Guantanamo, etc. I won't say they are CIA agents—we don't know. ***They have no history of support to the Revolution***."

In a report on his Cuba trip to the New York Spartacist Committee, Al said, "There is no question that by the end of the trip everyone had some understanding of what Trotskyism is." Al also reported that there was a hard racial polarization within the group between the black nationalist militants and the liberals and "quasi-socialists" with thinly disguised racist attitudes. Al and his Spartacist comrades sided with the militant nationalists, while also struggling to win them to the understanding that class, not race, is the basic division within U.S. capitalist society.

On the trip, Al discovered that the Fidelistas were hushing up leaders of the struggle for black liberation in the U.S. in order to pursue the pipe dream of "peaceful coexistence" with U.S. imperialism. Robert F. Williams—the black revolutionist who had advocated armed self-defense for the civil rights movement (see his book *Negroes with Guns*, 1962) and fled to Cuba to escape a racist FBI manhunt—had been censored by the Fidelistas. His "Radio Free Dixie" show was taken off the air for a period of time and the publication of his newspaper, *The Crusader*, was suspended.



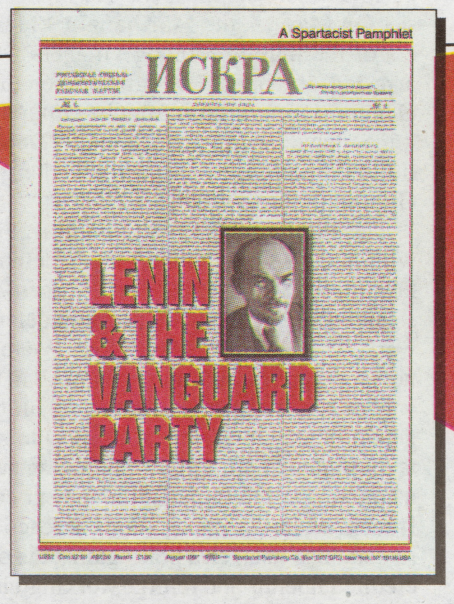
Albert Spanfelner, 27 años, maquinista.

...No hay duda de que el pueblo apoya a la Revolución. Espero poder trabajar para la Revolución Cubana en mi país...

Cartoon of Al Nelson during trip to Cuba, which first appeared in 10 July 1964 issue of *Bohemia*. Al is quoted "...There is no doubt that the people support the Revolution. I hope to be able to work for the Cuban Revolution in my country...".

Al wrote the groundbreaking article "Freedom for Cuban Trotskyists!" (*Spartacist* No. 3, January-February 1965). This article shattered the shameful cover-up by the American left of political repression in Cuba, including censorship of black militants as well as the suppression of Trotskyists. With the precision and programmatic clarity that defined Al at his best, he wrote:

> "To survive, the Cuban workers' state ***must*** break out of its political and economic isolation and its corrupting dependence on the Soviet Union. The narrow nationalist ideology has to be discarded and replaced by a revolutionary foreign policy, building and providing leadership and assistance to the revolutionary movement throughout Latin America. The overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of workers' states in Venezuela, Bolivia,



Al was a renowned party educator, whose class on the party question was chosen for introduction to Spartacist pamphlet.

and Chile are very much on the agenda and represent the ***only*** effective way to smash Cuba's present isolation....

"The formation of a conscious, revolutionary party—the instrument crucial to such a development, the establishment of soviets, genuine workers' councils, *i.e.,* those representative bodies of self-government that in a workers' democracy express the will of the working masses, would result in the widest participation of the Cuban workers and farmers in the leadership of their state, with the free discussion and rich democratic political life that marked the early years of the Russian Revolution. Such a development would have a profound effect on the working populations of the capitalist countries, exposing all the lies and slanders of their governments concerning the Cuban Revolution. In addition, this would provide a powerful impetus to the workers of the other deformed workers' states to get rid of their own bureaucracies and take control of their state, continuing what was begun in East Germany in 1953 and Poland and Hungary in 1956."

Spartacist

Al Nelson chairing 1966 public meeting on founding of Spartacist League/U.S.

Building the Spartacist League

As the civil rights struggles moved North, it became increasingly clear to the most radical militants that liberal integrationism was a dead end. The U.S. ruling class was willing to abolish Jim Crow laws in the South because they had become an international embarrassment. But ***forcible segregation***—economically, socially and politically—of black people at the bottom of society was ruthlessly maintained North and South to divide the working class and buttress the American capitalist system. This led to a series of ghetto explosions in the mid to late 1960s, provoked by the cops, who brutalized black people with a vengeance. Harlem was a hotbed of militant black struggle in the North. The 1964 murder of a black teenager by an off-duty cop ignited mass protest. The Democratic Party liberals who ruled New York City sang freedom songs for King's pacifist marches in the South while unleashing the full force of police terror on black Harlem.

The only people who actively intervened in defense of the black community were reds. Al Nelson and many other Spartacist comrades had been deeply involved in building the Harlem Organizing Committee. They helped organize rent strikes and block committees to challenge the slumlords, fought for self-defense against brutality and independent political action against the Democratic and Republican parties.

When Harlem exploded in 1964 in response to the cop murder, Spartacist joined the Harlem Defense Council, initiated by Progressive Labor, seeking to provide effective organization and direction to the people in the streets. Outside Harlem, we launched the united-front Harlem Solidarity Committee to rouse the New York labor movement in defense of the black masses and take the heat off the ghetto. The committee rallied about a thousand people in the garment district around the slogans: "Remove the Rioting Cops from Harlem" and "Support the Right of the Citizens of the Ghetto to Defend Themselves" (see "Harlem Riot and After," *Spartacist* No. 3, January-February 1965). When the state accused Spartacist of being behind the riots in Los Angeles and Chicago, Al was selected to be the Spartacist spokesman at public meetings built with flyers reading, "What is behind these 'race riots'? How can they be changed into conscious political struggle? What can you do?"

Al Nelson was also the party spokesman for the break with the liberal Vietnam antiwar "Committee for the 5th Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade" in 1965. This was typical of the lash-ups often built by radical leftists and avowed socialists that demand "unity" on the lowest common denominator politically in order to subordinate movements to Democratic Party liberals. Genuine Marxists are banned from raising their own views and debating those of other organizations. In pointed remarks aimed at the SWP that had brokered this class-collaborationist antiwar committee, Nelson said, "We for one value ***our*** political viewpoints more than we do such a fake 'unity'." Before leading a walkout, he continued:

> "We are not simply for stopping the war, but rather ***for*** the victory of the social revolution that is taking place in Vietnam. It is absurd, and against the interest of the revolution, to call simply for disengagement of forces, and implies a confidence in the integrity of U.S. Imperialism to keep such a bargain. You have completely obscured what we think is the most important character of the Vietnam war—that this is a naked, ruthless intervention by U.S. Imperialism to interrupt and drive back a social revolution in Vietnam, a revolution that is the ***only*** road to freedom for the Vietnamese working masses. We are not neutral in this. What is involved is not simply a matter of self-determination or moral indignation or national security or the honor and reputation of the American people as the Call indicates. The best defense of the Vietnamese revolution in this country is to build a militant antiwar movement strong enough to compel the United States to get out of Vietnam!"
>
> —*Spartacist* press release
> (reprinted in *Spartacist* No. 5,
> November-December 1965)

In 1966, Al was sent on a national tour to politically consolidate the SL's membership as well as give public talks on "Revolutionary Perspectives for the Anti-War Movement." The forum flyer proudly proclaimed Al's credentials: "Central Committee Member and Organizer for Spartacist; Former National Committee Member of YSA; Politically Undesirable Discharge from U.S. Army; Part of Ban-Breaking 1964 Cuba Trip; Spartacist Delegate to Recent NCC [National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam] Convention."

Al's forum in New Orleans is legendary. He was the first communist ever to speak at Louisiana State University. The mayor of Baton Rouge sent a telegram to the governor of Louisiana, who phoned the President of the United States to suggest arresting Al and opening an FBI investigation. The Associated Press put this local campus forum on its national wire service. Radio and television crews covered the event for three days. At one press conference, the governor said that "Nelson apparently violated the U.S. treason laws, and the only facility which should be made available to such persons is the jail." Apparently dissuaded from pursuing charges of treason, the governor then wanted to have Al put in a mental institution. Branches of the Ku Klux Klan that had not met in years carried out cross-burnings.

Family photo

Al in 1968. Capitalist press and lawmakers went nuts when he called for victory to Vietnamese during 1966 tour of Louisiana campuses.

Al's forum sparked leftist ferment too. He reported to a meeting of New York Spartacist that the New Orleans forum had convinced one former member to rejoin and more recruits were pending. To say he made a splash in the conservative American South would be quite an understatement. Decades later, people still remembered the Spartacist spokesman in New Orleans who declared solidarity with the North Vietnamese against U.S. imperialism.

Seeking International Extension

The Spartacist League's founding cadres knew that national isolation inside the U.S. imperialist behemoth would inevitably lead to political degeneration. The international Trotskyist movement had been severely damaged by fascists, Stalinists and bourgeois repression in World War II. Michel Pablo came to dominate the postwar Fourth International with revisionist politics that undermined the struggle to build Trotskyist parties. Pabloism was defined by the capitulatory perspective of joining Stalinist parties for the long term and cheerleading petty-bourgeois guerrilla movements. This liquidationism was a consequence of the theoretical inability of the postwar Trotskyists to apply revolutionary Marxism in a world order that was different from what had been projected by Leon Trotsky, who had been assassinated in 1940.

The Spartacist tendency sided with the anti-Pablo currents in the Trotskyist movement. We sought to clarify the political differences that existed among the various groups that claimed the mantle of Trotskyism, with the goal of forging a unified Fourth International through splits and fusions based on key programmatic criteria.

A delegation of our leading comrades went to the 1966 London conference on reconstructing the Fourth International, called by Gerry Healy's International Committee (IC). We fundamentally agreed with the IC's written perspectives. But we also were very frank about our differences with Healy—the class nature of Cuba, the strategic nature of the black question in the U.S. and the necessity to combat Pabloism. None of this sat well with Healy, who pompously proclaimed that he had already defeated Pabloism and the IC was the Fourth International. It was clear that we would not be the uncritical acolytes Healy sought, so he fabricated an organizational pretext (Jim Robertson's absence from one conference session) and expelled the Spartacist delegation (see *Spartacist* No. 6, June-July 1966).

This split with Healy was a blow to comrades, who were eager to become part of an international movement. After getting the news from Jim Robertson, Al dashed out a memo to all comrades: "Flash!... We must stand firm in the face of this unprincipled attack. Nothing must get in the way of building a revolutionary movement here as part of the rebuilding of the Fourth International." Al signed off with the words "Granite Hardness!!"—a motto that epitomized Al himself and what he demanded of others.

Leninist parties are built through internal fights over how to concretely intervene to advance the struggles of the working class and the oppressed in a given time and place. Al earned his spurs by fighting to politically cohere our cadre in the party's formative years, including through key factional struggles (see "On Party History," *Marxist Studies* No. 10, June 2018). It is not easy to distill the core political differences underlying fights that first appear to be about organizational or tactical issues or personal grievances. At his best, Al sharply clarified the underlying political differences in dispute for the benefit of the party majority and minority alike. As a member of the RT minority faction expelled by the SWP, Al knew first hand

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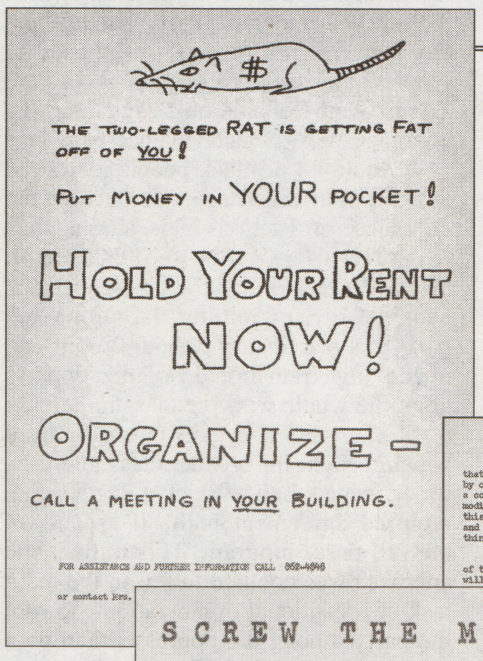
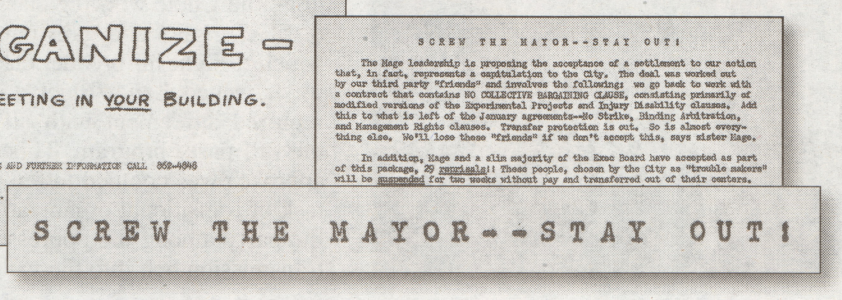


Spartacist leaflet with Al's cartoon of "the two-legged rat" calls for rent strikes against Harlem slumlords, 1964.


SCREW THE MAYOR--STAY OUT!

The Mage leadership is proposing the acceptance of a settlement to our action that, in fact, represents a capitulation to the City. The deal was worked out by our third party "friends" and involves the following: we go back to work with a contract that contains NO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CLAUSE, consisting primarily of modified versions of the Experimental Projects and Injury Disability clauses. Add this to what is left of the January agreements--No Strike, Binding Arbitration, and Management Rights clauses. Transfer protection is cut. So is almost everything else. We'll lose these "friends" if we don't accept this, says sister Mage.

In addition, Mage and a slim majority of the Exec Board have accepted as part of this package, 29 reprisals!! These people, chosen by the City as "trouble makers" will be suspended for two weeks without pay and transferred out of their centers.

SCREW THE MAYOR--STAY OUT!

Al Nelson wrote leaflet (below) issued by SSEU Members for a Militant Caucus urging welfare workers to continue 1967 strike in defiance of NYC mayor and union bureaucrats.

that the majority is not the whole party and that sometimes minorities are right.

Communist Work in the Trade Unions

Al grew up in a working-class family and was skillful with his hands. Against the bourgeois division between mental and manual labor, he appreciated manual labor and maintenance as thinking work and essential problem-solving for men and women. While a young member of the RT, Al was fired from his job at a non-union print shop for organizing his co-workers into the printers union. During the 1965 New York City welfare workers union (SSEU) strike for union recognition, Al wrote articles for *Spartacist* and an exemplary Spartacist leaflet, "To Win This Strike" (see *Spartacist* Bound Volume No.1). In 1967 he got a job as a case worker and joined the SSEU Committee for a Militant Caucus. During the union's hard-fought strike that year, he wrote the committee's lively leaflet, "Screw the Mayor—Stay Out!". In retrospect, Jim Robertson argued that this union work had been economist—i.e., narrowly focused on shopfloor issues. Al agreed with this criticism and thought he and our other supporters in the union should have addressed the burning issue young workers wanted to discuss: the Vietnam War.

Al moved to the Bay Area in the early 1970s and worked as a machinist. The powerful May 1968 strike in France had demonstrated to New Leftists that the working class was not "bought off" and had the power to bring down capitalism. Young people who had been radicalized in the New Left, black power and women's liberation movements went into the factories, eager to fight for radical ideals within the labor movement. The Spartacist League implanted young comrades in key industries in this period, and Al provided political leadership to several of the party's industrial fractions. In the Bay Area alone, he was the party rep and/or closely involved in the work of three fractions simultaneously—auto, longshore/warehouse and the phone company—and later transit and public utilities.

At the Fremont General Motors plant in 1977, abuse by a racist foreman sparked a strike. In consultation with Al, our friends in the UAW put forward a concrete program that showed workers ***how to win***. The UAW Militant Caucus fought for elected strike committees, building mass picket lines and extending the strike to other GM plants to win better working conditions. Our caucus gained authority and a hearing among the nearly 6,000 workers in the plant.

During the recession in the early 1980s, the caucus fought for sit-down strikes against the nationwide mass layoffs of auto workers. Al played a key role in patiently training caucus members to sharpen their writing skills in order to better direct workers in the fight for leadership of the union to advance their struggles. The caucus came close to organizing the needed sit-down strike despite the union bureaucracy's active opposition. The September 1981 caucus leaflet stated:

> "We Need a Sitdown
>
> "We have a union and we should use it to fight for our jobs. We need a sitdown strike demanding that THE TRUCK LINE STAYS IN FREMONT! The UAW was built by sitdown strikes during the depression in 1936-37. Properly organized it has proved to be the most effective strike tactic ever devised. Because the strikers are on the ***inside*** occupying the plant and the management and other usual strikebreakers are on the outside. Big stockpiles and low sales can weaken a regular strike but not a sitdown. With the strikers holding GM's sacred property hostage, all production, including passenger startup, comes to a halt. With no production and the ensuing publicity we could force GM to reverse its decision. They get their plant back when we get our jobs back."

A New Political Period

A new political period had begun with President Jimmy Carter's "human rights" crusade, the democratic wrapping to refurbish the image of U.S. imperialism as it revved up the Cold War against the Soviet Union. And in 1980, in walked Ronald Reagan, nobody's idea of a typical liberal. But the capitalist political order transcends the two-party system. ***All*** wings of the U.S. imperialist ruling class cohere around the fundamental policies that bolster capitalism in particular times and circumstances—in this instance, liberalism.

WV Photo

Al Nelson leading 5,000-strong labor/black mobilization that stopped KKK from marching in Washington, D.C., 1982. Al led most of the party's mass united-front anti-fascist actions.

The 1980s was a contradictory time for us. We initiated mass labor/black mobilizations against fascist terror. Al led the party in many of the most successful and important of these interventions. We were uniquely the hardcore Soviet defensists in Cold War II against U.S. imperialism's drive to destroy the deformed and degenerated workers states. In 1989-90, we fought with all our might to lead the working class in a political revolution against Stalinism and the capitalist reunification of Germany. But the party was blind to the role of liberalism as the dominant ideology of the ruling class. Consequently, we became increasingly rigid in our understanding of the world and the internal regime became harsher and more brittle. Al was the concentrated expression of both the good and the bad in the party.

Reagan's firing of the entire striking workforce of air traffic controllers in 1981 was a catastrophe that redefined the relationship of forces between labor and capital in the U.S. Labor could have won this showdown against the right-wing neoliberal Reagan regime. But the trade-union misleaders—from the AFL-CIO's top brass to local airport union leaders—***refused to shut down the airports***. After PATCO, it became routine for private industry to ***permanently*** replace strikers with scabs. Labor's chief weapon—militant strikes to bring capitalist production to a halt—was a downed tool by the union bureaucrats.

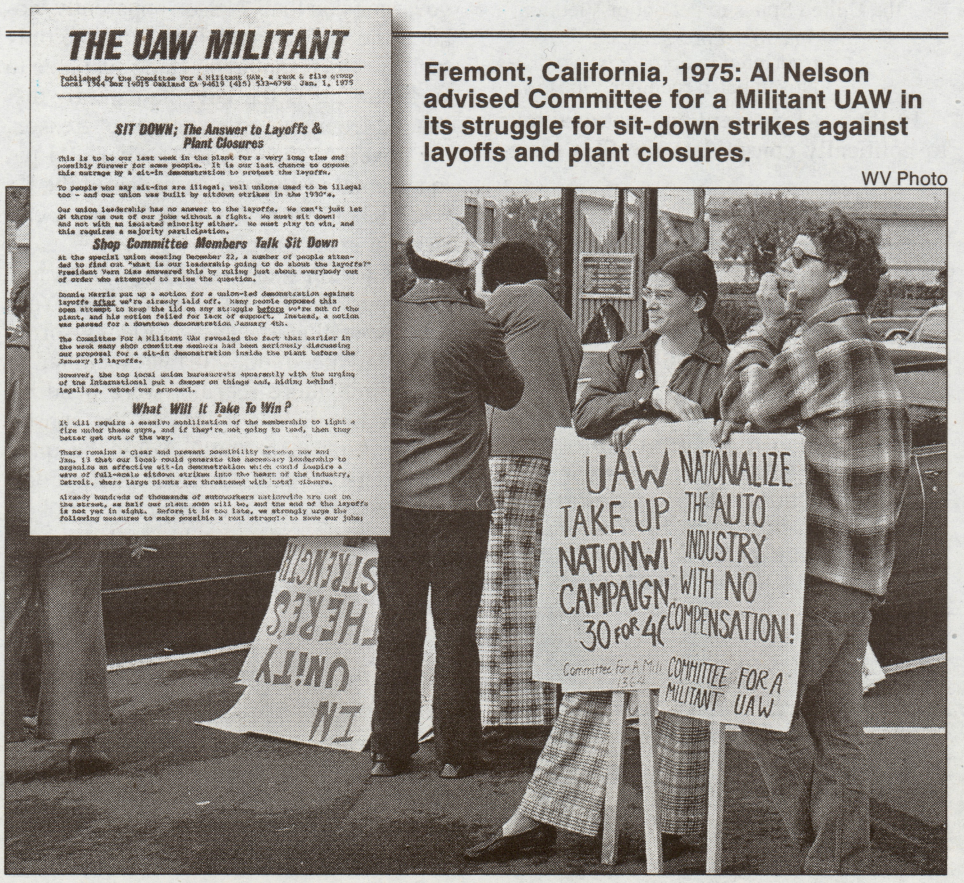
The defeat of PATCO took its toll on the working class and the party. The history and long-lasting effects of the McCarthyite witchhunt in the late 1940s and '50s was a factor in the party's response to PATCO. We feared that our slender roots and influence in the working class would be destroyed as happened to the Communist Party and other leftists during the Cold War. But more fundamentally, we had difficulty making adjustments to pursue our revolutionary purpose in the face of the heightened conservatism in the working class as the entire country shifted to the right in the 1980s. It was necessary to wage defensive battles as part of forging class-struggle oppositions within the unions. Instead, we wrongly advised our friends in industry to keep their heads down and wait for better times.

This "anti-caucus perspective" was not implemented overnight or simultaneously in all industries, but the trend was undeniable. Party propaganda, while critical of the trade-union bureaucracy, was increasingly economist. Without fighting for revolutionary leadership in the concrete, we had nothing to offer but abstractions and more militant tactics. But every major strike puts workers directly up against the capitalist state, necessitating a ***political*** struggle against the labor lieutenants of capital.

This lasting retreat was a break from our very purpose in the labor movement:

> "The caucus must expose the union bureaucrats as unwilling and unable to fight for the felt needs of the workers, and must transcend simple bread-and-butter unionism through a program of transitional demands linking proletarian class consciousness with a unified perspective of general social struggle against capitalism."
>
> —"Development and Tactics of the Spartacist League," *Spartacist* No. 14, November-December 1969

Problems in our trade-union work sterilized our efforts to build transitional organizations to win black workers to the party. Under the pressure of the escalating assaults on labor, Al convinced Chicago comrades that it was not a good time to build a caucus in industry, despite the authority they had earned by successfully beating back a 1987 racist frame-up of a fellow transit worker. The Chicago local had correctly argued that a local Labor Black Struggle League was not a substitute for a caucus in the union. The two have different purposes: one inside the plants, one in the broader black community. ***They must be linked in struggle through communists in the trade unions, who have the leverage to unite and mobilize the organized, integrated proletariat.***


THE UAW MILITANT

Published by the Committee for A Militant UAW, a rank & file group Local 1364 Box 10015 Oakland CA 94619 (415) 533-6799 Jan. 1, 1979

SIT DOWN; The Answer to Layoffs & Plant Closures

This is to be our last week in the plant for a very long time and possibly forever for some people. It is our last chance to organize this outrage by a sit-in demonstration to protest the layoffs.

To people who say sit-ins are illegal, well unions used to be illegal too - and our union was built by sitdown strikes in the 1930's.

Our union leadership has no answer to the layoffs. We can't just let GM throw us out of our jobs without a fight. We must sit down! And not with an isolated minority either. We must play to win, and this requires a majority participation.

Shop Committee Members Talk Sit Down

At the special union meeting December 22, a number of people attended to find out "what is our leadership going to do about the layoffs?" President Yarn Like answered this by ruling just about everybody out of order who attempted to raise the question.

Bonnie Harris put up a motion for a union-led demonstration against layoffs After we're already laid off. Many people opposed this open attempt to keep the lid on any struggle before we're out of the plant, and his motion failed for lack of support. Instead, a motion was passed for a downtown demonstration January 4th.

The Committee for A Militant UAW revealed the fact that earlier in the week many shop committee members had been seriously discussing our proposal for a sit-in demonstration inside the plant before the January 13 layoffs.

However, the top local union bureaucrats apparently with the urging of the international put a damper on things and, hiding behind legalisms, vetoed our proposal.

What Will It Take To Win?

It will require a massive mobilization of the membership to light a fire under these guys, and if they're not going to lead, then they better get out of the way.

There remains a clear and present possibility between now and Jan. 13 that our local could generate the necessary leadership to organize an effective sit-in demonstration which could inspire a wave of full-scale sitdown strikes into the heart of the industry, Detroit, where layoffs are now threatened with total closure.

Already hundreds of thousands of autoworkers nationwide are out on the street, as half our plant soon will be, and the end of the layoffs is not yet in sight. Before it is too late, we strongly urge the following measures to make possible a real struggle to save our jobs:

Fremont, California, 1975: Al Nelson advised Committee for a Militant UAW in its struggle for sit-down strikes against layoffs and plant closures.

WV Photo

Labor and Black: March Forward Together or Fall Back Separately

The domestic reflection of the anti-Soviet war drive was a war against labor and black people at home. In 1979, under Jimmy Carter's "human rights" crusade, the federal government and local police colluded with the KKK to gun down an integrated group of five civil rights leaders, trade-union organizers and leftists in Greensboro, North Carolina. Ronald Reagan's election was the green light for KKK and Nazi fascists to emerge from Southern backwaters and encroach on urban centers to terrorize black people and other intended victims.

The KKK announced plans to march in the nation's capital on November 27, 1982, in full fascist regalia, for the first time since the 1920s. We knew this had to be stopped, but our condition to go ahead was securing solid support from the organized, integrated proletariat in the region. We got labor endorsements and commitments to build labor defense guards. We moved ahead, with Al Nelson as our leader on site. This was no pacifist "ban the Klan" diversion on the other side of town. We mobilized the multiracial working class in black D.C. to be where the Klan said it was going to be and stop the fascist provocation before it could start.

All of Al's talents and training—military, political, organizational, polemical, pedagogical—were summoned to make this day a huge success. Some 5,000 determined anti-fascists took over the Klan's intended march route and jubilantly marched to the White House. The state responded by lobbing tear gas grenades and clubbing demonstrators. This sent people running—a classic police set-up to shoot black people in the back and then blame the victims. Al pulled the crowd back from chaos and reunified a militant, orderly demonstration that turned to face the cops while chanting, "***Move back slowly!***" The antifascist protesters marched back to Lafayette Park for a spontaneous victory rally. Al declared from the stage: "***There are no white sheets here today—only the red banner of the working class!***"

Al led almost every one of the party's mass labor/black mobilizations against the fascists, beginning with the heavily black working-class demonstration in Detroit's Kennedy Square that stopped a threatened KKK march one week after the 1979 Greensboro massacre. In all of the anti-fascist mobilizations, we were up against the black Democratic Party mayors, the city lawyers and the cops—who tried to suppress any such protest—as well as the Zionist Anti-Defamation League and the bourgeois press, which violence-baited us.

A whole lot of black people identified with the Spartacist League for leading the ***only*** successful actions in decades against rising racist terror. But we didn't recruit much. We recognized the obstacles black people faced to joining a flaming red party in a reactionary period. But instead of building transitional organizations to unite the whole working class in defense of black rights and gain purchase from which to fight for broader class interests, we launched Labor/Black Leagues that required agreement with all aspects of the full party program. This ultimatistic approach was doomed to fail in the main task of transitional organizations: to root the party among the oppressed and be a transmission belt into the vanguard.

Spartacist

Left: Al Nelson (right) with comrades Liz Gordon and Jim Robertson during European tour to seek out opportunities for revolutionary regroupment, West Berlin, 1970. Right: ICL initiated 250,000-strong united-front rally in East Berlin to protest fascist desecration of Soviet statue. Banner reads: "Down With NATO! Defend the Soviet Union!", January 1990.

Spartakist

By the 1980s, immigration had begun to significantly alter the social composition of the American working class. Instead of having a serious discussion on how to combine the fight for black liberation with the fight against Latino oppression, the party demagogically branded comrades who pointed to the importance of Latino workers as unwilling to recruit black people. This only served to make the party more brittle and removed from the changing reality in the U.S. Al Nelson, on behalf of the whole party leadership, led a fight against Stan Gow at the August 1983 Seventh SL/U.S. National Conference that posed the race-baiting, liberal moralist question, "Are *You* Ready to Live in a 70 Percent Black Party?" In 2015, the Fourteenth SL/U.S. National Conference revised our outlook to one of "building a 70 percent black, Hispanic and other minority Bolshevik Party," essentially the same perspective for which Gow had argued.

Fighting Capitalist Counterrevolution

Throughout Cold War II, the ICL stood its ground in defense of the Soviet Union in every proxy war provoked by U.S. imperialism. As the petty bourgeoisie and fake left shifted sharply to the right and lined up behind their own ruling class, we proudly defended the workers states against imperialism everywhere Cold War II flared: in Poland against Solidarność that had become a tool of imperialism, in Central America, in Afghanistan. We correctly emphasized the ***military*** defense of the states that had overthrown capitalist rule but downplayed the equally urgent need for ***political*** revolution to overthrow the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy that jeopardized and ultimately sold out the remaining gains of the October Revolution (see article on page 12).

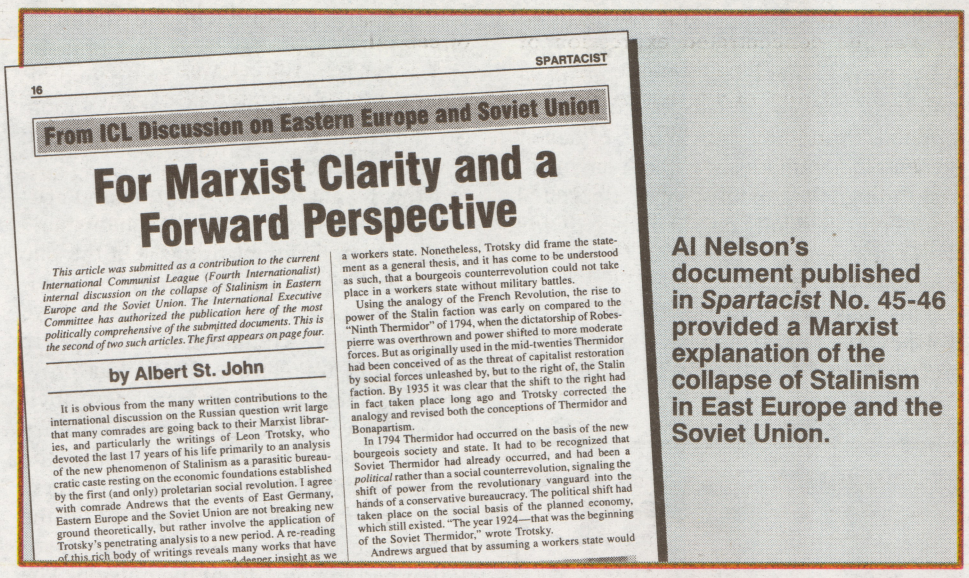
Notably, our predecessors in the Revolutionary Tendency did ***not*** reduce Trotskyism to reliance on the Stalinists to thwart U.S. imperialism's counterrevolutionary schemes. The 1962 "Declaration on the Cuban Crisis," signed by 24 members of the RT including Al Nelson, opposed the SWP's political capitulation to Fidel Castro and the Kremlin. It stated:

> "The decisive point in the political line in defense of the Cuban revolution against ***all*** its enemies is explicit denunciation of the counter-revolutionary role of the Stalinist bureaucracy ***in the concrete instance of Cuba***. The Cuban revolution cannot be defended by arms ***under the control of the Kremlin bureaucrats whose only interest is to turn the revolution to the service of Russian foreign policy, including selling it out entirely if the price is right***" (emphasis in original).

The Stalinophilia that marred the ICL's interventions in the early 1980s was overcome in our full-on Trotskyist fight to stop the Stalinist sellout of the DDR (East Germany) and the Soviet Union to capitalist counterrevolution. We tried to split the working-class base from the ruling Stalinist parties. We sold hundreds of thousands of copies of our new daily newspaper, *Arprekorr*, at mass protests against the ruling Stalinist party and at factory gates throughout East and West Germany. We distributed Russian-language greetings to Red Army soldiers, got them copies of Trotsky's brilliant analysis of Stalinism, *The Revolution Betrayed*, and talked politics, suitably lubricated with vodka, in their barracks.

The high point of the ICL's fight against capitalist *Anschluss* and for the revolutionary reunification of Germany under the rule of workers councils (soviets) was 3 January 1990. That day, over 250,000 people came out to the united-front rally that we initiated to protest the fascist desecration of the Soviet war memorial in East Berlin's Treptow Park. For the first time since Trotsky's exile from the USSR, genuine Trotskyists had a mass hearing in a Stalinist country. Al Nelson led this intervention as our field commander in Berlin.

Our small band of international comrades in Berlin had been schooled in relatively slow years as members of small propaganda groups. Al fought to forge comrades into the subjective factor that was required to lead the proletariat in an objectively prerevolutionary situation.



SPARTACIST

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From ICL Discussion on Eastern Europe and Soviet Union

For Marxist Clarity and a Forward Perspective

This article was submitted as a contribution to the current International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) internal discussion on the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The International Executive Committee has authorized the publication here of the most politically comprehensive of the submitted documents. This is the second of two such articles. The first appears on page four.

by Albert St. John

It is obvious from the many written contributions to the international discussion on the Russian question writ large that many comrades are going back to their Marxist libraries, and particularly the writings of Leon Trotsky, who devoted the last 17 years of his life primarily to an analysis of the new phenomenon of Stalinism as a parasitic bureaucratic caste resting on the economic foundations established by the first (and only) proletarian social revolution. I agree with comrade Andrews that the events of East Germany, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are not breaking new ground theoretically, but rather involve the application of Trotsky's penetrating analysis to a new period. A re-reading of this rich body of writings reveals many works that have

a workers state. Nonetheless, Trotsky did frame the statement as a general thesis, and it has come to be understood as such, that a bourgeois counterrevolution could not take place in a workers state without military battles.

Using the analogy of the French Revolution, the rise to power of the Stalin faction was early on compared to the "Ninth Thermidor" of 1794, when the dictatorship of Robespierre was overthrown and power shifted to more moderate forces. But as originally used in the mid-twenties Thermidor had been conceived of as the threat of capitalist restoration by social forces unleashed by, but to the right of, the Stalin faction. By 1935 it was clear that the shift to the right had in fact taken place long ago and Trotsky corrected the analogy and revised both the conceptions of Thermidor and Bonapartism.

In 1794 Thermidor had occurred on the basis of the new bourgeois society and state. It had to be recognized that Soviet Thermidor had already occurred, and had been a *political* rather than a social counterrevolution, signaling the shift of power from the revolutionary vanguard into the hands of a conservative bureaucracy. The political shift had taken place on the social basis of the planned economy, which still existed. "The year 1924—that was the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor," wrote Trotsky.

Andrews argued that by assuming a workers state would

Al Nelson's document published in *Spartacist* No. 45-46 provided a Marxist explanation of the collapse of Stalinism in East Europe and the Soviet Union.

He hammered in the lessons of Lenin's fight to widely open the door of the Bolshevik Party to the rapidly radicalizing working class in the 1905 Russian Revolution. Similarly, we needed to quickly align our organizational practices with the rare political opportunity evidenced by tremendous receptivity to our Trotskyist propaganda and interventions among broad sections of the DDR.

New organizations—Spartakist groups—were needed to win large numbers to the fundamentals of our program immediately. Returning from a failed attempt to organize a Spartakist group in Halle, a leading comrade explained that we couldn't get people to sign up. Al thundered:

> "***Sign what!!!*** We're not asking them to agree with the 21 conditions for membership in the early Comintern for Christsake! It's so simple: 'You, along with millions of other citizens of the East German workers state want to smash Stalinism and defend the proletarian property forms that determine the class nature of this state. Excellent! For this reason, you and others here have welcomed the political expression of your ideas contained in our daily *Spartacist* newspaper. The best way that you and your friends here can distribute the paper to thousands of others who will be equally excited by its powerful, clarifying ideas is to organize into a working group to determine the best way to proceed in your area and make assignments, elect a treasurer, etc. Here are 10,000 copies to start. Go to the factories, the barracks, the youth clubs, nearby schools, door to door, etc. To assist you, we will leave this experienced comrade here who, after the distributions would be very happy to discuss all the questions spinning through your heads in exchange for a place to sleep. Do your work first and work hard because time is of the essence. We must do everything we can to fill the role of leadership vacated by the absolutely bankrupt Stalinist leadership of the SED, to keep out the capitalists and their SPD advance guard'."
>
> —Letter from Al Nelson in Berlin to the International Secretariat, 14-15 December 1989

After the terrible defeat in Germany and the collapse of Stalinism throughout East Europe and the Soviet Union, Al fought demoralization and played a key role in helping the ICL explain what had happened. The International Executive Committee selected his contribution, "For Marxist Clarity and a Forward Perspective," for publication because it was a programmatically powerful and comprehensive analysis of events in the DDR (see *Spartacist* No. 45-46, Winter 1990-91). Al wrote:

> "Some 65 years after Stalinism first made its appearance as the result of the isolation of the first workers revolution, Trotsky's analysis now shines through with an even greater clarity. We are Trotskyists and do not mourn the passing of this parasitic phenomenon. Its life span was prolonged only because workers revolution had not been extended to the industrial West, itself in large measure a product of the crimes of Stalinism against the workers movement, both by omission as well as commission. The danger lies in the fact that Stalinism's demise has not been brought about by the struggles of the proletariat."

The ICL's Degeneration in the Post-Soviet World

The collapse of the Soviet Union represented a fundamental change in the world situation. The ICL dismissed U.S. imperialism's liberal triumphalism and completely misread the world as rife with fascistic reaction and heightened interimperialist rivalries threatening a new world war. We proclaimed "communism lives" in working-class struggles but failed to vie for leadership of those struggles ***against the liberals***. This was a retreat from the defining task of Leninists—to ***split*** the working class from its existing misleaders. We increasingly shelved Marxism as a doctrine for safekeeping until the "retrogression in consciousness" was somehow overcome without the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard.

The ICL's inability to deal politically with the new period both gave rise to and was reinforced by increasing bureaucratism. Al was in the forefront of this process, just as he had been in every aspect of our party's life until then. In 1995-1996, Al initiated a bureaucratic fight against longtime *WV* editor Jan Norden. Norden and his collaborators were purged, fraternal relations with a group in Brazil were broken on unprincipled grounds and the ICL doubled down on a totally sectarian course. The expelled comrades went on to launch the Internationalist Group (IG) and the League for the Fourth International (LFI).

The ICL and the LFI were two virtually indistinguishable organizations, creating confusion and setting back the struggle to reforge the Fourth International. The findings of an extensive investigation by the ICL's International Control Commission have just been published (see *Report on the Bureaucratic Purge of IG Founders and the Break in Relations with Luta Metalúrgica*). Al Nelson was but one of the central party leaders who waged this damaging fight. Our repudiation of what was one of the worst crimes in the ICL's history was made possible only through the intense internal struggles that exposed and reversed our deep political revisionism in the post-Soviet period.

At the commemoration of his 30th anniversary as a Trotskyist, Al said of Jim:

> "And for all of my 30 years he has been my teacher, collaborator and friend. Together we have carried forward the struggle of James Cannon and his comrades. So I can't really think of myself separate from the Leninist collective, of which I have been a component. We all exist as a function of our Marxist revolutionary program. Without the party I would be nothing."

But the political degeneration of the party led to a destructive blowout between Al and Jim in June 2000. Thereafter, Al was perceived by comrades as the source of the party's bureaucratism, while Jim was credited with everything good about the party, despite Jim's caution that comrades were too authority prone. Al was marginalized in the party for the rest of his life, causing great suffering to him and his partner and comrade Karen.

In 2003, Al requested consultative membership. In that capacity a decade later, he wrote a razor-sharp letter protesting the following statement in the 2015 SL/U.S. National Conference Document: "We intervened heavily into events and protests around the Black Lives Matter, but our tiny propaganda group does not have the social weight to influence the ideological leadership of the protests, and objective circumstances have not created a layer of left-moving activists."

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Critical Review of Our Line on Afghanistan

SPARTACIST

NUMBER 27-28 WINTER 1979-80 75 CENTS

Imperialist Frenzy Over Afghanistan

Hail Red Army!

Lochan/Gamma-Liaison

The American government is talking as if it is about to start World War III over Afghanistan—or at least a vicarious form of it around the Olympic games. In his "state of the union" speech Jimmy Carter openly threatened a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union in the Persian Gulf. Because the USSR came to the aid of its allies in Kabul, Washington has visions of the Soviet army seizing Iranian and Saudi oilfields, of the staid Brezhnev fomenting revolution among the Kurds, Turkomans and, above all, Baluchis. It is patently absurd but the American president really believes it.

Behind Washington's present Cold War frenzy is the fundamental imperialist desire to obliterate the social conquests of the Russian October Revolution. Compared to 20 years ago, however, the United States' world position is greatly weakened and the role of its imperialist allies much greater. The end of U.S. hegemony was marked by

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The following is an excerpt, edited for publication, of a presentation by SL/U.S. Central Committee member Jon Brule at a recent CC plenum. The presentation—which was approved in its entirety by the International Executive Committee—also took up our line on Poland in the 1980s, but we want to give more consideration to the matter through fuller internal discussion.

I am going to deal with the beginnings of Cold War II, particularly in relation to Afghanistan, and the political problems our tendency had. Cold War II represented a fundamental shift from the 1960s and most of the '70s. In the earlier period, the imperialists were on the defensive: they lost Cuba and then much of Southeast Asia in the Vietnam War. But by the late 1970s, they had regrouped, with Carter launching his anti-Soviet "human rights" crusade. Reagan massively escalated military expenditure and went on the offensive against the USSR.

During the Reagan years, our International Secretariat was heavily focused on holding the line against the anti-Soviet war drive. This was urgently necessary, but our "defense" increasingly became an all-purpose substitute for tracing a revolutionary road for the working class in particular conflicts and particular countries like Afghanistan. Over time, almost everything got reduced to military defense of the USSR against imperialism. In the process, the equally crucial component of a genuine defense—proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy—was increasingly jettisoned.

Afghanistan

Key to addressing the situation in Afghanistan is an understanding of permanent revolution as it applies to countries of belated capitalist development. The motor forces for revolution here are democratic questions—national liberation, agrarian revolution and women's liberation. But this we rejected. Instead, we claimed that since Afghanistan had only a tiny proletariat, there were no forces within the country that could lead to a social transformation. So, this had to come from the outside; in this case, we preached that through an objective process, a prolonged military occupation by the Soviet army—the army of a degenerated workers state—a social transformation would be carried through. This could only amount to political support to the Stalinist state apparatus and bureaucracy.

It is necessary to counterpose the methods of Lenin and the early Communist International to our methods. See in particular the section of our Eighth International Conference document on permanent revolution titled "In Defense of the Second and Fourth Comintern Congresses" (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 68, September 2023). Lenin, dealing with the most underdeveloped countries in the East, concluded "There is practically no industrial proletariat in these countries. Nevertheless, we have assumed, we must assume, the role of leader even there" (Theses on the National and Colonial Questions," 1920).

At the Second CI Congress, Lenin argued, concerning countries where precapitalist conditions prevail, that it was the unconditional duty of the communist parties "to conduct propaganda in favor of the peasants' soviets or of working people's soviets. This includes backward and colonial countries." He explicitly stated that with the assistance of the soviet governments "it will be a mistake to assume that the backward peoples must inevitably go through the capitalist stage of development" and that "the backward countries, aided by the proletariat of the advanced countries, can go over to the soviet system and, through certain stages of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage" (reprinted from John Riddell, ed., *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite!* Volume One [1991]).

This was not only the theory of the Bolsheviks, but also what they did in practice—and I will give an example a little later. But here I just want to state what I think our revolutionary strategy should have been in Afghanistan, which is a combination of peasant revolution, carried out in alliance with the Soviet soldiers in the country, that is, the soldiers organized in their own committees, or soviets, independent of the Stalinist bureaucracy. This would also have been a motor force for political revolution in the USSR. Many of these soldiers were from Soviet Central Asia and were conscious that what they were encountering in Afghanistan was very similar to the conditions their grandparents endured prior to the victorious October Revolution.

Now, obviously this is quite counterposed to our line, which claimed that permanent revolution didn't apply to countries with a small proletariat. In particular, we had a whole discussion that concluded that permanent revolution didn't apply to Afghanistan, which you can find in an internal bulletin. This wasn't Trotsky's conception of permanent revolution at all. He wrote that the program of permanent revolution "eliminates the question of countries that are 'mature' or 'immature' for socialism in the spirit of that pedantic, lifeless classification given by the present programme of the Comintern" ("What Is the Permanent Revolution?"). Indeed, this was a central polemic with the Stalinists, who alibied their betrayal in China by claiming the country was too economically backward for proletarian revolution. So, the position we had was not Trotskyist; it was Stalinist.

Now, I want to briefly comment on the slogan "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" It can mean different things. On the one hand, I don't think we should second-guess whether the Soviets should have intervened in Afghanistan. They were responding to massive Cold War provocations there and elsewhere, and obviously we very strongly took a military side with the Soviet Red Army against the *mujahedin* and their imperialist backers.

However, it's necessary to look at the politics we attributed to this slogan: revolution had to come from the outside. The overwhelming peasant majority was dismissed as hopelessly backward and totally captive to Islamic reaction. We sneered: "Forget proletarian revolution—Afghanistan could not even sustain the kind of widespread peasant revolt experienced in medieval France, Russia and China" (*WV* No. 471, 17 February 1989). Although on occasion we acknowledged that the Soviets might withdraw their troops, we said that "more likely is the Soviet army's prolonged occupation of Afghanistan and with it the possibility of its transformation along the lines of Soviet Central Asia or Mongolia" (*Spartacist* No. 29, Summer 1980). Thus, the best possible outcome, according to us, was a deformed workers state. But even that projection was fatuous, to boot.

Chronology

In 1965, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was founded. The PDPA's leaders, like Noor Mohammed Taraki, were recruited to the Kremlin version of Marxism-Leninism. However, as one writer explained, "According to the official Soviet line, it is not possible for underdeveloped Third World countries to bring about a socialist revolution because they lack an industrial labour class. Such states are, therefore, advised to work towards a socialist revolution through the formation of a 'nationalist government,' organized by a 'united nationalist front' which can lead them through the 'national democratic phase'" (Raja Anwar, *The Tragedy of Afghanistan*).

Accordingly, the PDPA program stated: "The political pillars of the national government of Afghanistan would consist of a united national front representing all the progressive, democratic and nationalistic forces, that is workers, farmers, enlightened and progressive intellectuals, craftsmen, the petit bourgeoisie and national capitalists"; in other words, a popular front. Note that while the conclusion drawn by the PDPA was different from ours, the political premise was the same—absence of a viable working class ruled out a socialist transformation from within.

The social base of the PDPA was not only the modernizing intelligentsia and students, but also army officers. Many of these had been educated and trained in the Soviet Union. But the PDPA lacked any base among the toiling peasantry. The party was divided into two factions—Khalq and Parcham. Although there were no fundamental political differences between these groups, they engaged in bloody factional warfare with each other, including assassinations and arrests depending on who held the upper hand.

In the post-World War II period, there was considerable jockeying by the U.S. and the USSR for influence in Afghanistan. By the mid 1970s, the situation was tilting toward the Western imperialists. The Parcham faction, which was represented in the government of Muhammad Daoud (leader of the 1973 coup that overthrew the monarchy), was purged. The Shah of Iran, Washington's man in Central Asia, undertook to provide a massive program of foreign aid in order to curry influence with Daoud. Alarmed, the PDPA seized power in April 1978. This was not a popular insurrection—the PDPA lacked any popular forces—but rather a military coup.

In the summer of that year, the PDPA government, then headed by Khalq, initiated a series of reforms. The first item was agrarian reform. If ever a country cried out for agrarian revolution, it was Afghanistan. There was massive inequality in the countryside: only 5 percent of landowners held 45 percent of all cultivable land, while 83 percent of the poorest peasants held only 35 percent of the land. The land of the majority of poor peasants was heavily mortgaged; interest rates were commonly 50 percent a year, which meant in practice that the peasants could never get out of debt. The PDPA land reform stipulated that for small landowners, mortgages would be considered paid off after five years. In

Al Nelson...

(continued from page 11)

Al contrasted this with the Editorial Note in the very first issue of *Spartacist* (February-March 1964):

> "We want to ***influence*** such radical and leftward moving groups or sections as aspire to Marxist clarity and direction. We frankly state in advance that the purpose of our action is to further a revolutionary regroupment of forces in this country such that a Leninist vanguard party of the working class will emerge.... Critical to our success will be the ability of our comrades to be involved as revolutionists in the social struggles of our times and to undertake effective inquiry into the pressing theoretical and political issues posed for Marxists today."

Al continued:

> "At our founding conference on Labor Day 1966 we had 78 members. After the split [with] the Ellens/Turner faction we had about 47 members. If we had the mindset of the Draft Conference document about 'tiny' numbers we should have all called it quits then and there and there never would have been a Spartacist League/US and the IC[L]."

Al's letter did not see the light of day until Karen brought it to the attention of the International Secretariat during its struggle to resurrect the SL/U.S., which had collapsed at the outset of the Covid pandemic. Despite his ongoing isolation, Al remained committed to the party and its cause until the very end. Prior to his death, he and Karen annotated the minutes of the RT, making this invaluable history accessible to comrades and the broader workers movement.

Family photo

Al with his longtime companion, comrade Karen.

This long overdue comradely salute to Al Nelson is part of reclaiming our revolutionary history—including learning from our mistakes—to reforge the Fourth International that will guide the working class in its struggles to overthrow imperialism. ■

addition, the PDPA decree regarding marriage declared child marriages illegal and set a maximum limit on the "bride price" and on money payable to the wife in case of dissolution of the contract. Education was supposed to become universal, for all female as well as male children.

These reforms failed. The reason was not that they were too radical. The PDPA took no measures against the ruling elite of khans, landowners and moneylenders or the substantial caste of Islamic priests (the mullahs). The landowners withheld seeds from the poorer peasants, and the banks refused to advance loans. The PDPA government did not provide alternative sources of credit. More generally, it tried to implement reforms by bureaucratic decree, taking no steps to mobilize the toiling masses as a social force against the landlords and tribal chiefs. The agrarian reform was a failure. The peasants turned their backs on the PDPA because they did not perceive that the government was acting in their material interests.

In this situation, it was easy for the Islamic reactionaries to whip up a massive backlash against the government, targeting in particular the reforms for women and girls and playing on the conservative religious feelings of the peasantry. The reforms that were applicable to women and the family changed nothing in the countryside, benefiting only a small layer of better-off urbanized women. (For an account of how the Bolsheviks carried out work in a comparable situation in Central Asia, see "Early Bolshevik Work Among Women of the Soviet East," *Women and Revolution* No. 12, Summer 1976.)

In order to bring stability, the Soviets intervened militarily in December 1979. In the course of this intervention,

RGASPI

Dictionary of Mongolian History

Founding Chinese Communist leader Chen Duxiu (left) supported Mongolian independence, achieved through 1921 victory of Soviet and Mongol armies (right) over counterrevolutionaries and Japanese imperialists.

Ceyrac/AFP

Soviet soldiers in barracks near Kabul, January 1987. The struggle for revolution in Afghanistan required alliance between Soviet soldiers committees and peasant masses.

the Khalq leader, Habizullah Amin, was killed and the Parcham faction—whom the Soviets preferred because they regarded it as more moderate—was put in power. The Soviets, in fact, sought to cut back and limit the social reforms. In 1981, the agrarian reform was restricted: exceptions were made for army officers and tribal leaders who supported the government. Refugees who had fled the country for Pakistan and elsewhere to escape the government decrees were promised their land back if they returned. In 1986, the PDPA leader Babrak Karmal was forced out and replaced by Najibullah. The Soviets strong-armed the PDPA into calling for a government of national reconciliation, which, incredibly, was supposed to include the *mujahedin*. Under Najibullah, female education was made voluntary.

Contrary to our projection that a prolonged military occupation would likely lead to the cohering of some kind of deformed workers state, the Soviets made clear their preference to leave. As early as May 1980, Soviet general secretary Leonid Brezhnev stated that on condition that the West, as well as Pakistan and Iran, ceased aiding the *mujahedin,* the question of the Red Army's withdrawal could be resolved.

At the time, we had a close sympathizer in India, who wrote to us. While comrade Roy agreed with our military defense of the Red Army, he was disturbed by our largely uncritical attitude toward the Soviet intervention. He noted the conciliatory attitude of the Soviets toward the mullahs. He didn't buy our line that the Soviet occupation would lead to a social transformation. Rather, he asserted that "all indications that what the future has in store for the Russians is a new Finland [where Soviet troops withdrew after World War II] at best" and not some kind of workers state. He was right. I should add that his criticisms were never put into an internal bulletin.

National Liberation

We repeatedly denied that Afghanistan had the right of national sovereignty or national self-determination. We intoned that Afghanistan was not a nation but a "feudal-derived state comprising a mosaic of nationalities, ethnic and tribal groupings" ("Afghanistan and the Left: The Russian Question Point Blank," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 29, Summer 1980). That Afghanistan is not an ethnically homogeneous nation hardly makes it unique. What about South Africa or India or Pakistan or any semi-colonial country, where to suit their own interests the imperialists determined the borders and deliberately inhibited nation-building? As regards Afghanistan and the desire for national sovereignty, what about the fierce wars fought to repel occupations by the Russians and the British Empire in the 19th century or the defeat of the two-decade U.S. occupation more recently?

I am not arguing that it is wrong in principle for a workers state to intervene outside its borders, and obviously I am not calling into question our siding with the Red Army in the war in Afghanistan. However, when such interventions are done, they must be carried out with scrupulous regard for the national sensibilities of the oppressed people. Such an army of intervention must seek to win a base of social support in the local toiling people, so that it is not viewed as an enemy occupying force, as the Soviet army was largely viewed in the Afghan countryside. Our derisive comments denying national sovereignty to the Afghan peoples totally disregarded this responsibility. We never seriously addressed the Great Russian chauvinism of the Soviet bureaucracy, as manifested from the time Lenin intervened against Stalin over Georgia to the national oppression of the Polish and other East European deformed workers states by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Now in *Spartacist* No. 29 (Summer 1980) we had an article titled "The Bolsheviks and the 'Export of Revolution'." It was intended as a polemic with a Maoist who accused us of having the line of Tukhachevsky, a Soviet general who advocated that Red Army interventions abroad could substitute for indigenous social revolutions. The article makes a number of correct arguments against such a perspective. It quotes Trotsky that intervention from the outside can speed up the revolutionary process but not substitute for it: "In the monumental class struggle which is today on the rise, the role of military intervention from without must have only an attendant, assisting, auxiliary function." This is all well and good. But the problem is that our line on Afghanistan was the total opposite of what Trotsky was saying!

In 1989, we sent a reporter to Afghanistan who had an interview with a PDPA spokesman. We advised the PDPA cadre to read Plekhanov, who broke from Russian populism (the Narodniks) to become a Marxist at a time when Russia was beginning to industrialize. Our point was that the PDPA, like Plekhanov, should seek to orient to the workers. But this begged the essential question: ***What was to be done now?*** The implicit answer was to wait passively until a significant proletariat appeared in Afghanistan.

It is notable that we did not propose reading Trotsky on permanent revolution, or Lenin. This is not how the Bolsheviks dealt with comparable situations. One example was in November 1921 when representatives of the newly formed Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party asked Lenin's advice over what to do. Mongolia was a very backward country economically, populated largely by herdsmen (*arats*). Lenin did not tell the Mongolian revolutionaries to come back when they had a proletariat. Instead, Lenin elaborated on the idea that it was possible and necessary for the Mongolian People's Republic "to follow a non-capitalist path of development" and pointed to how the work of the People's Revolutionary Party and the government "would result in a growth of the number of co-operatives, in the introduction of new forms of economic activity and national culture, and would rally the arats behind the Party and the Government in the interests of the country's economic and cultural development" ("Talk with a Delegation of the Mongolian People's Republic," 5 November 1921).

In practice, what was set up was an alliance between the Mongolian revolutionaries and the Red Army, which helped clear the area of the Japanese imperialists and White generals. This led to a successful social transformation of Outer Mongolia. It also serves as a model for what could have been achieved in Afghanistan, an alliance of peasant revolutionaries and Soviet soldiers committees, to push forward social revolution in Afghanistan and proletarian political revolution in the USSR. ■

NEW ICL BULLETIN

Report on the Bureaucratic Purge of IG Founders and the Break in Relations with Luta Metalúrgica

by the ICL's International Control Commission

iclfi.org/pubs/pamphlets/icc-ig-lm

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TROTSKYIST LEAGUE IN QUEBEC AND CANADA

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RCA...

(continued from page 5)

workers and declining standard of living for the class as a whole, you proclaim that today's "class balance of forces is overwhelmingly in favor of the workers."! We beseech you, comrades, to wake up before it is too late! The order of the day is preparing defensive struggle, not offensive! Denying this will only lead to disaster.

Get into the Labor Movement

Your document correctly notes the spineless antics of the trade-union bureaucracy in response to Trump's tariffs and the attacks on government workers. Yes, Fain and O'Brien identify the interests of the working class with the capitalist class, and their tactics flow from their pro-imperialist strategy. But as for what union militants should do now, you offer nothing but the pronouncement that "Eventually, the current crop of labor leaders will be pushed toward class independence or pushed out altogether—the workers will have no alternative." This is a recipe for trying to pressure these labor traitors to the left or waiting for the working class to conclude it needs communism—both of which leave the bureaucrats in command and does nothing to aid today's union struggles.

You cannot pressure the union bureaucrats to cease seeking a partnership with the bosses–this is their political program! Holding out this hope can only demoralize the working class, breed anti-union attitudes, and smear the name of communism by giving "progressive" and not-so "progressive" union officials a left cover. Even in the most limited struggles, communists fight to advance the unity, consciousness and organization of the class. This cannot be done simply by criticizing the methods of the union leadership without seeking to build a new leadership based on a revolutionary strategy.

You have recruited hundreds of youth who see themselves as communists? Good! You should have them get industrial jobs and help push union struggles forward. The working class does not spontaneously develop communist consciousness, as Lenin explains at length in *What Is to Be Done?* It must be brought to the working class from the outside. Neither passivity in the face of the massive shocks hitting the working class nor hopes that the current crop of trade-union tops will see the light will win the working class to communism. Nor will they do anything to bridge the massive gulf currently existing between the working class and the left. To do that, the left must go to the working class and provide answers on what to do. The only way to truly increase the influence of revolutionary ideas is to work in the unions and show how they are essential to advancing workers struggle. The argument that you are too small to do this is just an excuse for your refusal to build an opposition to the labor bureaucracy.

Fight for Black Liberation, Key to American Revolution

While you recognize the hypocritical and pernicious role of liberalism, your document neither effectively answers the advocates of identity politics nor provides any way to break down the racial divisions the bourgeoisie uses to divide and defeat working-class struggle. You write: "Lip service to the concrete problems of everyday life is not enough. For example, DEI policies at corporations like Target have done nothing to address the systemic racism that gave rise to the historic George Floyd movement." Yet you yourselves provide no counter to liberalism other than abstractly calling for "class unity." What you never say is that workers have a vested interest in actively fighting against racial oppression. Ignoring this and simply talking about the common interests of all workers, etc., means keeping in place the racial divisions that must be overcome to unite the class and further its struggles today.

During the UAW strike, we motivated to auto workers that winning their demands was going to take a completely different strategy from that of Fain's, one that connected their struggle to the fight for black liberation. Black people are forcibly segregated at the bottom of society not because of the prevalence of racist ideas, but because this is a powerful tool for the capitalist rulers to drive down the living standards of the working class, pit workers against each other for a shrinking pool of jobs, housing and education and stabilize capitalist class rule. White workers can't liberate themselves without fighting for black liberation; and conversely, because black oppression exists to maintain capitalism in the U.S., black people can't liberate themselves without fighting to smash capitalism.

Toward the end of your document, you note that "Five years have passed since the George Floyd movement shook the world. Had the RCA been present nationwide in sufficient quantity and quality, we could have given that raw explosion of anger a clear class expression and focus." But that movement was not simply a raw explosion of anger, but a liberal one for cop reform. What was needed was to split it from the liberals who led it to defeat. The fundamental problem of the RCA's predecessors at the time, like ourselves and the rest of the left, wasn't your size but your tailing of BLM liberalism. You go on to note: "Since then, there have been no movements or strikes even approximating that scale. But the pressures of life under capitalism are intractable, and eventually, we *will* face a tsunami of class struggle—*this* is the perspective we must prepare for." But why, when police brutality is more rampant than ever and the working class is in desperate need of relief, would you just sit around waiting?

Anyway, as you recognize, the liberals have washed their hands of the matter. It has fallen to the left to reignite the movement—not on liberal grounds, but rather on the basis of the unity of interests of the working class and black people against the ruling class and its repressive state apparatus. That is why we launched the "Open All Police Archives" campaign. You call to "fight Trump and the liberals"—cool. But how are you going to actually do it? Crucial to this campaign is the exposure in action of the liberals, who claim to be on the side of black people but when push comes to shove, show themselves to be on the side of state secrecy. We seriously encourage you to join us in this united-front campaign to rebuild the movement against cop terror.

Conclusion

We hope that RCA comrades will consider our criticisms and respond in the interests of political clarification and putting the Marxist left on a firmer foundation. Having a wrong understanding of unfolding events and current consciousness can only lead to setting wrong tasks. It is essential that, as the U.S. imperialists strike at the working class and the oppressed, Marxists have answers for how to come out on the other side of this crisis intact with minimal damage.

Communist greetings,
Edward Dalton and Lital Singer,
for the Spartacist League/U.S.,
section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

DSA...

(continued from page 4)

tours the country with has-been Bernie Sanders to "fight oligarchy." But like her past promises, this is little more than an effort to corral discontent with Trump back behind ***her section of the oligarchy.***

Universal healthcare will be won through hard class struggle, not by convincing the capitalist parasites in the halls of Congress to care about people who don't have access to life-saving drugs or medical treatment. Allying with representatives of the capitalist class like Bernie and AOC forecloses the possibility of getting anything. The two of them wouldn't even fight the Democratic establishment on something as popular as expanded Medicare. The idea that these liberals would put up a fight to build a workers party is laughable.

The electeds aren't allies of the oppressed, either, but rather gravediggers of living struggles. Take Rashida Tlaib, who retains widespread support among the DSA Left. Last year, she acted as the primary link between the pro-Palestine movement and the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. She provided the Democrats an invaluable service through her effort to keep outrage over the genocide in Gaza contained within the party fold. This culminated in the "uncommitted" swindle, which proved quite committed to Kamala Harris. To win a lasting ceasefire and free Palestine, workers action was and is needed to stop arms shipments to Israel. But none of these elected "socialists" called for anything remotely resembling such action and posed no threat whatsoever; instead, they continued to drum up hope in the Democrats, who were carrying out one of the worst crimes of the 21st century. If they wouldn't break over genocide, they ***never*** will.

A more "left-wing" version of the dirty break argument (preferred by the Marxist Unity Group and Reform and Revolution) raises criticisms of the electeds, only to propose to put them under "DSA discipline" or to run openly as socialists against the Democratic Party ***on the Democratic Party ballot line***. As this argument goes, abiding by "DSA electoral discipline" and voting as a Democrat against other Democrats will ensure a strong socialist force can be birthed before splitting from its capitalist parent. But this is beyond fatuous. The Democratic electeds can easily be replaced if they don't toe the party line or otherwise provide some useful function to the liberal imperialists. There is no shortage of examples where the Democrats have simply sabotaged a campaign when the wrong candidate won the primary or put up another candidate against an incumbent (see the fate of Cori Bush). The whole idea that "actual socialists" can be elected as Democrats to organize and lead a split with the Democratic Party is the stuff fantasy series are made of—and would by design keep socialists running around in circles chained to the Democrats while the world burns around them.

At bottom, the dirty break is an expression of DSA's big tent politics, which put a premium on unity between the Democratic Party's open agents (the DSA Right) and those who see themselves as revolutionaries of some variety or another (the DSA Left). The big tent binds these elements together, entirely to the benefit of the Democrats and the capitalist ruling class. It allows the Right, with its Democratic Party connections, to dominate the organization and gives the Left a cover whereby it can talk about socialism in the sweet bye-and-bye and criticize the more egregiously liberal crap pushed by the Right. All this does is obscure the fact that, at the end of the day, the Left's differences with the Right are not fundamentally principled, but tactical in nature.

Whereas the Right openly calls to support the Democrats as the lesser evil, the Left recognizes the unpopularity of the Democrats and so couches this support with "socialist" language. Reform and Revolution wants to run a "socialist" slate of Congressional Democratic primary candidates in 2026, for example. How is this any different from AOC and Tlaib calling themselves socialists? It isn't, despite all the claims that these Democrats would be different because they would allegedly take their orders not from Hakeem Jeffries, but from the DSA NPC (which couldn't even oppose Harris in last year's election). Of course, Reform and Revolution itself called for a vote to Harris in swing states—giving away the whole dirty break game outlined in its resolution, "For a Socialist Party in Years, Not Decades," which is to say, ***never*** a socialist party. The dirty break is disaster on repeat for the socialist movement and an expression of the liberal-reformist program widely prevalent in DSA, including among the Left.

Because of this, breaking with the Democratic Party in and of itself would not make the DSA a revolutionary party. But it ***would*** further the process of political clarification and provide a real avenue for revolutionaries in DSA to expose the bankruptcy of liberal-reformism and fight to win the best elements of the Left over to a revolutionary perspective. The Right would quit to follow the Democrats? Good—let them go where they belong! A DSA without the Democrats and the elected traitors would put the program of the Left to the test, as they would have no Right-wing to blame for their inability to win what working people need. The alternative is to keep walking down a road that promises only to widen the gulf between working people and socialists, driving the former further into the arms of reaction and ensuring the latter never have any impact to speak of. ■

South Korea...

(continued from page 2)

by seeking coexistence with imperialism and the regional capitalist rulers, the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies undermine the fight for an anti-imperialist alliance of workers throughout the region and the workers states themselves.

Prepare for Coming Attacks

If, as expected, Lee Jae-myung wins the election, it will not be a step forward for the workers. South Korea already has one of the widest inequality gaps between rich and poor among heavily industrialized capitalist countries. Real wages are stagnant, personal debt is astronomical and there is an ongoing housing crisis. And now we have the Trump tsunami and a looming global economic crisis.

The working class must prepare for defensive struggles to defend its rights, jobs and working conditions, whichever party is in power. There are already moves to expand the workweek in the strategic semiconductor industry above the current 52 hours, with Lee Jae-myung signaling his support. Defense of the working class poses the need for joint action by the different union federations, whose relations are deeply hostile. The more militant KCTU and the FKTU, whose roots are in the corporatist unions under the U.S.-backed dictatorships, each organize a bit over a million workers, while nearly half a million more are in independent unions. But almost 90 percent of the workforce is not organized. There must be a fight to bring them into the unions.

All these tasks pose the need for a new working-class leadership that is not beholden to the South Korean capitalists and that takes a stand against U.S. imperialism. As we said in the statement we distributed to protesters in Seoul after the coup last December, the question posed pointblank in South Korea today is "which side are you on, the U.S. or the working class?"

We offer the following perspectives for forging an anti-imperialist pole in the workers movement:

- ***Break the U.S. alliance!*** All American troops and bases out. Tear up the U.S.-South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty.
- ***Oppose the U.S.-led drive against China, North Korea!*** Take a side with China against the U.S. trade war, strengthen economic collaboration.
- ***No support to any capitalist party!*** Lee Jae-myung is no ally of the working class. Break with the Democratic Party, build a workers party.
- ***For united labor struggle against capitalist attacks!*** Defend jobs, working conditions, democratic rights. Organize the unorganized into the unions.
- ***For revolutionary reunification of Korea!*** Kick out the capitalists in the South and Stalinist bureaucrats in the North. Unite the workers in struggle throughout East Asia! ■

South Africa...

(continued from page 16)

this mess is to bridge these divisions based on the need for all those under siege to take a united stand against the common U.S. imperialist enemy.

It should be lost on absolutely nobody that Trump's eagerness to bring white Afrikaner farmers into the U.S. is surpassed only by his eagerness to kick out all other, especially brown and black, peoples. In line with this, Trump has all but declared open season on the black South African workers, toilers and poor. They are reviled by the U.S. ruling class for yearning for land, decent jobs, adequate housing, basic services and control of the mines and other imperialist-owned property—in short, for yearning for an end to brutal, imperialist-backed neo-apartheid. That's what is behind Trump's instruction to Ramaphosa to take care of Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) leader Julius Malema: snuffing out any movement that even gestures toward fighting for the land and resources that rightly belong to the black masses. ***Hands off Malema and the EFF!***

For over 70 years, black South Africans have been waiting for the ANC to implement the burning democratic demands for land and equality contained in its Freedom Charter. But to achieve any of these demands requires a fight against the imperialists and Randlords. This is exactly the opposite of the ANC's strategy of working in tandem with them to suppress the aspirations of the working and toiling masses. Even while calling for class struggle against imperialism and for the expropriation of the land and mines, the EFF leaders try to keep to a "middle road." They offer themselves as potential coalition partners of Ramaphosa, and in so doing restrain the struggle from going straight up against white capital/imperialism—and therefore doom it to failure.

Titmuss/UCG

Cape Town: Neo-apartheid shantytown squalor. Ramaphosa's GNU coalition enforces U.S. imperialist austerity.

The situation cries out for socialist intervention among the black masses to unlock their struggle and win their deeply felt demands by exposing all obstacles to its progress. Leftists like the Internationalist Group in the U.S. who denounce the Freedom Charter for its failure to call for socialist revolution cut themselves off from intersecting and directing the masses toward revolutionary conclusions as the only means to fulfill these aspirations. Even worse, with this opposition they find themselves telling the South African masses to reject the popular expression of the very demands that U.S. imperialism is now explicitly attacking.

The U.S. imperialists, aided and abetted by billionaire white Randlords like Johann Rupert, call the shots in South Africa. Ramaphosa's role is that of a complicit puppet beholden to white capital with the blood of black workers on his hands—the 34 striking miners gunned down in the 2012 Marikana massacre. You certainly can't look to him or the ANC to defend South Africa from a rampaging Trump. Only the working class, linked to all the oppressed layers of society, can bring the kind of decisive force needed to turn back U.S. imperialism's Commander-in-Chief.

Trump and his AfriForum buddies would gladly turn back the clock in South Africa to before 1994 and the end of formal apartheid, while the black elites facilitate imperialist plunder because they have been able to retain their sliver of the pie. In fact, the current "Government of National Unity" (GNU) coalition—made up of the ANC and the openly pro-imperialist and white-dominated Democratic Alliance—has already resorted to apartheid-era tactics in order to prevent any resistance to the strangulation of the black masses that the GNU enforces on behalf of Trump and the Randlords.

One such case is that of Xolani Khoza, an EFF member and trade unionist. In response to Xolani's helping organize a strike for better wages and working conditions and making a TikTok video critical of the government, he has been an early target of the GNU, which had him kidnapped and imprisoned. Xolani is now being framed up on "terrorism" charges. In South Africa, the defense of Xolani is an urgent and necessary first step in the fight to organize a broad defense of the working and oppressed masses against the Trump/GNU onslaught.

Here in the belly of the imperialist beast, the U.S. working class has every reason to take up Xolani's defense, not only as an expression of international labor solidarity, but also as an expression of opposition to U.S. imperialism and its squeezing of black Africa. Doing so would cut against the hold of the trade-union bureaucracy, which throttles working-class struggle for a better quality of life by pushing loyalty to U.S. imperialism. Cases like Xolani's can be the springboard for a broader working-class defense against Trump—a defense whose successes in the U.S. will be a boost to the struggles of the South African masses, and vice versa. The best defense of Xolani and South Africa's workers and oppressed peoples is for the multiracial working class here to launch a concerted fight to hold off the racist capitalist rulers—including the Democrats as well as Trump. And it is in the course of just such a fight that the struggles of the workers and the oppressed can be fused together to push forward the cause of black freedom against U.S. imperialism to the benefit of all working people.

- ***Cancel all imperialist-held debt!***
- ***Hands off South Africa!***
- ***For united-front defense of Xolani Khoza!***
- ***Down with U.S. imperialism!***
- ***For the united struggle of black and white workers for black liberation!***

George Floyd...

(continued from page 16)

only ever be accountable and transparent to their capitalist masters. Such schemes only entangle black people and Latinos in the very repressive state apparatus that is gunning for them—and are especially suicidal at the very moment Trump is ramping up repression across the board.

With the attacks escalating daily, it is more important than ever to link the struggles of the working class and all the oppressed in order to survive these turbulent times with minimal damage. The raw and justified anger expressed in the drive for justice for the cops' victims must be fused with the discontent simmering in the working class.

Our demand to open the archives is popular among victims of cop terror and their families, who are looking for answers and justice. Exposing the crimes of the capitalist state is an elementary act of self-defense for the black community. Many activists, though, still cling to so-called progressive and liberal forces, which only undermine the fight against cop terror. OPA helps break those chains by exposing the true face of the liberals, who smile and stab us in the back. For example, when "progressive" Alameda County DA Pamela Price was facing recall last year, we posed the question to her point blank: would she jail killer cops like she had promised and open the police archives or would she betray? Guess which one she did. This proved that her promises were just lip service to get into office by riding the BLM wave.

WV Photos

Left: UAW council endorses OPA campaign, June 3, Ottawa, Illinois. Right: Terry Lovett at Mother's Day rally outside L.A. jail where her son Jalani was killed in 2021. The cause of labor must be linked to fight against police brutality.

In recent months, OPA committees have brought our campaign into the unions. On June 3, Chicago OPA activists, including several relatives of victims of cop terror and racist frame-ups, were invited to report to the Region 4 UAW Civil & Human Rights Council, representing unionists from 12 North-Central states. Our campaign was extremely well received, and the Council endorsed OPA.

In the Bronx, we have held several united-front protests in solidarity with Eric Duprey's family at court dates for the cop who killed him, Erik Duran. Members of the Transit Workers for a Fighting Union were among the union members who have participated in the rallies. At the June 10 court date, the prosecutors admitted they had botched disclosure of hundreds of pages of evidence, claiming that the NYPD had hidden the files. This delayed the trial again and gave the defense arguments to exclude evidence or even dismiss the case. These developments only underscore that we cannot rely on the cops, prosecutors or courts for justice. All the files in these cases must be opened to public scrutiny!

In Los Angeles, the Committee for One Fighting Transit Union was part of an OPA contingent at a May 10 Mother's Day rally calling for justice for families of inmates who were killed at the L.A. Men's Central Jail. Earlier this spring, one of the protest organizers, Terry Lovett,

addressed a meeting of the Bay Area's International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 executive board, which voted to donate funds for a second autopsy for her son, Jalani Lovett. "I was a member of ILWU Local 6 for the twelve years that I worked at local warehouses, so I know how valuable a union is," Terry wrote in a letter to Local 10. "I thank Local 10 for supporting the call to Open All Police Archives, something I've been fighting for because I want to know what's in Jalani's records that they're not showing me."

Recently, the Freedom Socialist Party endorsed the OPA campaign, and the International People's Democratic Uhuru Movement has endorsed the Bronx Eric Duprey rallies. We encourage the rest of the left and everyone who wants to take a stand against racist cop terror to join or start an OPA committee. The OPA committees are united fronts, allowing people of different political tendencies to engage in common struggle while discussing and debating how best to fight cop terror, as well as the broader strategy for black liberation and the emancipation of the whole working people. ***Build OPA committees! For united multiracial class-struggle defense!*** ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Defend South Africa Against Trump

Last month's Oval Office spectacle of Trump bullying South African president and ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa was pure "white man's burden." In a raw display of imperial arrogance mixed with racist contempt, Trump read the riot act to Ramaphosa and made absolutely clear the consequences of defiance for South Africa. Everyone knows there is no genocide of white farmers in South Africa. In fact, the real crime occurring on the country's white-owned farms is the daily horrific abuse and exploitation of black farm workers at the hands of their Boer bosses.

The real story, though, is not that Trump is a liar, but rather that his strong-arm job is part of a broader agenda: creating a new world order to reassert U.S. imperialism's slipping dominance in anticipation of heightened conflict with China. South Africa is one of the BRICS countries, and the ANC claims "non-alignment" in its foreign policy. This does not sit well with Trump; South Africa is to be forced to line up behind the U.S. To this end, he is openly demanding greater subservience from the South African government while flexing U.S. imperialism's muscle by slapping tariffs on the country. The resulting economic shocks have exacerbated the misery of the nationally oppressed black masses. As U.S. imperialism further turns the screws, the South African working class and urban and rural poor will only lose more.

The nonsense about "white genocide" in South Africa also lets Trump give a wink and a nod to racist reactionaries while playing on the real insecurities of white workers in the U.S. to sell himself as their savior and polarize the working class here.

This racial polarization helps keep working people divided against themselves as he launches attacks on immigrants and the unions. Trump's crushing and starvation of the black South African masses goes hand in hand with his tightening the noose on the most vulnerable in the U.S. and assault on workers' living standards. The threat to this country's black population is unmistakable.

Freeman/Getty

May 21: Trump browbeats South African President Ramaphosa during White House visit, part of U.S. imperialism cracking the whip to get Global South to fall in line.

Many black people in the U.S. already feel a connection with black South Africans. Having suffered the consequences of segregation in this country, black workers strongly supported the struggle against apartheid. Now that the liberal mask has been torn off, the true face of racist U.S. imperialism again reveals itself.

Trump wants to eliminate all affirmative action programs in the U.S. and South Africa alike. While these token measures never had a prayer of redressing the massive inequality between black and white in either country, U.S. imperialism has dispensed with even the pretense of promoting racial equality. While liberal DEI initiatives hurt the black struggle by blaming racial oppression on the supposed "privilege" of white workers in the U.S. and thereby pushing them toward Trump, he is now rolling back these initiatives to whip up even greater racial hostility. The only way out of

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Five Years After George Floyd

WV Photo

How to Rebuild the Movement

In 2020, the video of George Floyd's death under the knee of Minneapolis cop Derek Chauvin sparked millions to protest nationwide. "Black Lives Matter" signs were everywhere, and in a rarity, Chauvin was convicted of murder. Many had hopes that the tide was turning for black America. But those hopes were quickly dashed. Murderous cop terror against black people and Latinos kept climbing to record levels—long before Trump's re-election. Just last month, three Memphis cops who beat young black motorist Tyre Nichols to death in 2023 were acquitted of all state charges. The Democrats who kneeled for George Floyd in 2020 have dropped any pretense of caring about black rights. The movement against police brutality has all but disappeared, leaving activists isolated and demoralized and racial segregation untouched.

Massive liberal BLM protests against cop killings in 2020 led nowhere. Rebuild the movement on a class-struggle basis—Open All Police Archives!

Why didn't the BLM protests do anything to improve conditions for black people in the U.S.? Everybody has an answer: the movement was hijacked, its leaders were corrupted or its organizers didn't work hard enough. All these explanations miss the key point. From the get-go, BLM was completely hamstrung by its dead-end liberal program of police reform, calling on the racist rulers, their politicians and even their killer cops to "do the right thing." "Black Lives Matter" was not a call for freedom or power, but an appeal to the bosses to "care" about black people. Everyone from Biden/Harris to the Bank of America embraced this empty sentiment without changing a thing. Because the country's rulers lean so heavily on black oppression to divide the working class and maintain their hold on society, it is impossible for the black struggle to take a single step forward without going up against the interests of the entire ruling class. A liberal movement like BLM—which seeks allies among the ruling class—will always betray.

The problem with BLM liberalism did not end there. BLM put the blame for racial oppression on racist ideas and the supposed "privilege" of white workers. That was both false and self-defeating. White workers have every reason to fight against black oppression. The capitalist rulers forcibly segregate black people at the bottom of society in order to drag down everyone's conditions and prevent a collective fight for better conditions. Instead of encouraging white workers to throw in with the black struggle to improve their own situation, BLM helped drive them into the arms of MAGA, reinforcing racial divisions in the working class.

The Open Police Archives (OPA) campaign aims to rebuild the movement against racist cop terror on a basis that can win, by showing in action the necessity of mobilizing the working class to fight for justice against the capitalist rulers. This is the very opposite of relying on the courts and prosecutors or pushing cop reform schemes that promise "accountability" and "transparency" or community control when the cops will

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Supplement
22 June 2025

Defend Iran Against U.S./Israel!

The U.S. has bombed Iran, and Trump threatens far greater death and destruction. Clearly, this country's rulers will stop at nothing in order to force the complete submission of a sovereign nation to their grand designs of renewed world domination. Trump is not just some dupe of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but the Commander-in-Chief of the most powerful ruling class on the planet eager to re-assert itself at everyone else's expense. The U.S. rulers have pulled the trigger on war not simply to aid their strategic partner in the Middle East in crushing the Iranians, but above all to mow down any and all opposition to themselves—foreign and domestic. If they suffer no consequences for their brazen aggression, it will be very bad news for all of us. Palestinians will face further devastation; the rest of the Global South will be even more aggressively squeezed; workers, black people and immigrants in the U.S will have to contend with even harsher attacks.

Many workers took as good coin Trump's promises to not drag the country into "forever wars" like the Democrats have done and instead to provide some relief for their economic pain. But make no mistake: Workers will pay the price for his warmongering, not only in the form of increased economic misery, but also by sacrificing their very lives in combat—and those of their children. Many other workers feared just such a turn of events under a second Trump presidency and have kept their heads down to protect themselves and their families. But the only real measure of protection against the tidal wave of attacks washing over us is collective working-class action—in particular, that which links our defense to the defense of Iran against the common U.S. imperialist enemy. Workers and the oppressed here have every reason to take up the defense of Iran. Trump has already demonstrated that he will deploy the military domestically, such as in Los Angeles against anti-ICE protesters, among them union officials. Any setback for the U.S. rulers in the Middle East will make it easier to head off their offensive at home.

The war against Iran needs to be stopped immediately. But the only way to actually accomplish this is to organize the working class to actively take up the defense of Iran—including by engaging in determined anti-imperialist action like refusing to produce or handle military goods for the war effort. No substantial opposition will be forthcoming from Democratic quarters. Even "progressives" like AOC and Bernie limit themselves to complaints that Trump did not get Congressional authorization before ordering the

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attack, as if Obama/Biden didn't do the same to Libya. In fact, as the party of genocide in Gaza, the Democrats under Biden/Harris did everything to prepare this attack on Iran—except push the button themselves for the missile launches. The Democrats are very much at one with Trump on the goal of getting rid of the Iranian regime that the U.S. elite consider a thorn in their sides.

Despite the need for a working-class response, the leaders of the unions—from the UAW's Shawn Fain on down—have thus far been silent on the U.S. bombing of Iran. This is not an oversight, but rather an outgrowth of their suicidal view that the fate of the U.S. working class rises and falls in sync with the fortunes of the U.S. ruling class on the world stage. To the extent any of them speak up, it will undoubtedly be to preach the virtues of peace.

WV Photo

New York City, June 22: Spartacists put defense of Iran against U.S./Israel front and center. Join us in building anti-imperialist contingents!

But war is already upon us—first L.A., now Iran—and new fronts will just keep popping up unless something changes. Pacifist pleas will only fall on deaf ears. Many cite the reactionary character of the Iranian regime as an excuse to pull back from the defense of Iran against the U.S. oligarchy—by far the most reactionary force out there. The Iranian regime does deserve to be ended—not by the much bigger U.S. sponsors of "state terrorism"—but by Iran's working and toiling masses. But this will be all the more difficult as long as the U.S. imperialists face no resistance at home to their conquest of that country.

The entire left in this country denounces U.S. imperialism, but most cannot bring themselves to put their money where their mouth is and openly state the obvious: We must defend Iran to defend ourselves. Pleas to "stop the war" are no basis on which to build a successful antiwar movement. Such appeals do not distinguish the left one whit from the "progressive" Democrats (or much of the MAGA crowd for that matter) or even begin to address the vital working-class interest in doing something to restrain Trump from escalating this war and starting the next. It will be possible to mobilize the working class to strike a blow against U.S. imperialism only if a sharp line is drawn against the imperialist Democratic Party and those chasing after them by sighing for peace. All leftists and workers who recognize the burning need to defend Iran right now should ***join together in anti-imperialist contingents*** at protests to amplify their voice and rally broader support to this course. ■

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